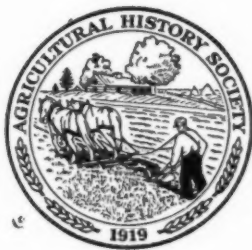


# AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

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## THE SEARCH FOR THE RURAL COMMUNITY

WALTER M. KOLLMORGEN AND ROBERT W. HARRISON<sup>1</sup>

Rural sociology is one of the popular new disciplines applied to agriculture. Perhaps the most effective vehicle for the promotion of this discipline has been the concept of the rural community. This concept, hoary with age, has been refurbished and glamorized into one of the major tools for studying rural society. Communities have been delineated from coast to coast, partly to promote the war effort. This popular and widespread activity suggests that the concept of the rural community has been clarified and standardized.

A close examination of this endeavor, however, reveals no standardization and simplification. Not only have rural sociologists failed to agree on definitions of the rural community, but some supporters of the discipline insist that this social entity no longer exists in many sections of the country. Others declare that the rural community is rapidly declining, and, as a result, elaborate programs have been developed for its revival. At the same time, numerous workers are lustily engaged in delineating communities, although there are those among them who on closer examination of selected rural areas reach a state of frustration and bewilderment in their search.

The confusion over what constitutes a community, an association, or a collective, and the basis for their existence, apparently arises out of the inability of rural sociologists to develop cumulative experience and a system of basic thought relating to this particular problem. While certain segments of the science of rural sociology have reached a point of synthesis, that of rural association or rural community activity has lagged. Some of the more prominent students in this specialty continue to recount old experiences, form definition after definition, and seek, in area after area, some scene that will support their latest theory of what the rural community really is. The search has been largely repetitious and

often circular. Quoting and re quoting of definitions has reached such proportions and is done in such a manner as to suggest that many authors attach importance to definitions not because of intrinsic merit or proved usefulness but because they have been praised by others.

The editors of *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology* recognized the confusion of definitions and prepared one of their own which involves two key types of rural association: cumulative rural communities and rural populations differentiated into functional groupings.<sup>2</sup> In their words the cumulative rural communities are those in which the members are:

... quite similar and highly like-minded, with a well-developed consciousness of the community and with a feeling of oneness and solidarity that is organic and deeply rooted. Under such circumstances there is a natural collective responsibility and collective consciousness. The fault of a member is the fault of the community; the achievements of a member are the achievements of the community; the community rather than the individual is the social unit that bears the responsibility. The community engulfs the individual and makes him an integral part of itself.

On the other hand:

The member of the population split into differentiated groupings is in quite a different position. Since he is insured in many companies, and since his savings are distributed among many different banks and firms, he is attached to some extent to all of them but is not attached for life and death to any one. He cannot give all his zeal and devotion to any one of them for he knows that if one company fails there are other companies and banks. . . . the personality of such a member is a mosaic, as are also his volitions, desires, ideas, and interests. . . . He is not engulfed entirely by any single grouping, but, being separate from all of them, he is said to be an "individualist," . . . . Under such circumstances his solidarity and relationships with his numerous partners in various

<sup>1</sup> While the authors are on the staff of the U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the statements and opinions presented here are entirely their own. Miss Johanna Kollmorgen made many helpful suggestions and assisted in preparing the manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Pitirim A. Sorokin, Carle C. Zimmerman, and Charles J. Galpin, editors, *A Systematic Source Book in Rural Sociology*, 1:305-361 (Minneapolis, 1930). The sentences here quoted are on pages 326-327, 330-331.

groupings is not organic but artificial, or contractual. It does not arise naturally but originates from a weighing of his interests, profits, and payments; it assumes the form of a contract in which the respective rights and duties of the parties are definitely agreed, have definite limits, and are outlined clearly in order that one party may not deceive the other.

This statement would seem a clarification of the major dilemmas particularly as it is supplemented with the following explanation:

In the numerous studies cited for the United States—those by D. Sanderson and O. Thompson, J. H. Kolb, E. H. Morgan and O. Howells, C. C. Zimmerman and C. C. Taylor, P. P. Denune, E. A. Taylor and F. R. Yoder, W. H. Baumgartel, B. L. Hummel, E. A. Wilson, C. Luther Fry, H. P. Douglass, E. de S. Brunner, L. Nelson, and a few others—in spite of the desire of their authors to find the basis and the boundaries of the rural community in America, factually they failed to find the cumulative rural community in any real sense. All they found was the existence of the rural population divided into many special groupings with all the characteristics of such groupings mentioned above. If, at the beginning of these American studies, the investigators had some hope of finding a cumulative rural community as a prevalent type of social organization among the American farmers, later on, as the investigations continued, such hope faded more and more. As a result, there have recently been published several studies in this field which have explicitly recognized the disappearance of cumulative communities among the American rural population and the growing replacement of them by the special functional groupings or “interest groups.” One of the most conspicuous samples of these studies is that of J. H. Kolb and A. F. Wileden, entitled *Special Interest Groups in Rural Society*. In 1920 Kolb thought he found cumulative communities in Wisconsin; in 1925 he was sure that such did not exist.

From here on one would expect attention to be centered on the functional rural association made up of its various interest groups and contractual ties, but this is not the case. Many rural sociologists still give much time to refining the psychological tools which they hope will help in their frantic search for the true community. The erring members, failing to find the cumulative community, as was the case with Carle C. Zimmerman and Carl C. Taylor in their study of Wake County, North Carolina,<sup>3</sup> are taunted with the charge that “they did not seem to

<sup>3</sup> Carle C. Zimmerman and Carl C. Taylor, “Rural Organization: A Study of Primary Groups in Wake County, N. C.,” North Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, *Bulletin* 245 (Raleigh, 1922).

penetrate beneath the surface for evidences of psychological unities.”<sup>4</sup>

The frustrations in studies of rural associations are clear enough. The reasons for these frustrations also are reasonably clear. They arise out of a seeking, in an age of pronounced individualism, for more secure relationships. This frustration and seeking involve a looking back to some former stability, when the community was a true fortress for its members. Doubtless the revolt against individualism (really it is a revolt against renaissance life) will lead up many blind alleys in its seeking for collective security. This situation need not make social scientists an easy prey to doctrinaire stereotypes or prompt them to drag out all manner of outdated concepts and old ways of doing things in an attempt to breathe life into old and discarded community forms in a frantic effort to “make them serve.” But it has done just this. There is a nation-wide search on for rural communities. The search is not for new forms which may be appearing or for greater understanding of modern conditions or trends. It is decidedly an effort to discover and revitalize the traditional forms, to find the hiding community leaders, and to set in motion the old value-creating machinery and local controls. Dwight Sanderson and Robert A. Polson have been particularly interested in breathing life into the old forms. Their chapter on “Community Projects” in *Rural Community Organization* (New York, 1939) is filled with suggestions for celebrations, such as national holidays, homecomings, community Christmas trees, old-home weeks, harvest festivals, community sings, field days, tournaments, pageants, and all the trappings of the medieval community. That their aims were entirely sincere is not questioned; that they are practical or even desirable is strongly doubted.

There is no desire here to discount the beauties or to discard the values of old communal forms or to deny their tremendous influences on present society. Seeking out these influences has proved immensely revealing and helpful in understanding the reasons behind current action and in predicting future trends. But the very act of seeking in the present a return to former ways or values is to acknowledge their loss of power over present actions.

The way out of these dilemmas has already been suggested by sociologists who desire to

<sup>4</sup> Newell LeRoy Sims, *Elements of Rural Sociology*, 94 (ed. 3, New York, 1940).

abandon the old ideas and attitudes implied in the great bulk of present community studies. Their plea is for a larger recognition of the fact that the *Gemeinschaft* is now largely a thing of the past and that the *Gesellschaft* is constantly taking new forms. In other words, they warn against seeing too much of the past in the present scene.

Had the definitions of the community offered in the *Source Book* been adhered to, they might have proved immensely useful. They embody many of the concepts of Ferdinand Tönnies in his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*.<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Heberle, as recently as September 1941, elucidated the application of the fundamental concepts of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* as they relate to rural community studies.<sup>6</sup> Few have taken these suggestions or put into practice any of their practical implications. The definition of the community continues confused. Geographical considerations are constantly debated. The phenomenon of social stratification is introduced by one definition and rejected by another, as are the matter of self-sufficiency and the feeling of oneness. The general trend seems to be toward a definition which does not involve a geographical element or any mention of physical matters. Carle C. Zimmerman, in his book, *The Changing Community*, has said: "For the purposes of this study, any community is a reality with a history."<sup>7</sup> This sounds like the reflection of an Eastern mystic. Most of the definitions are not quite so ethereal, but the newer ones tend in this direction.

Despite the changing definitions there has not been much change in the methods for discovering and defining the rural community. There is ample evidence that most researchers searching for the "community" have in mind data for and methods applicable only to the study of primitive (tribal) communities or cumulative communities, which do not exist in large numbers in the United

States. The most popular sociology textbooks state their modern definitions and then proceed to develop ideas and discussions of communities which depart so radically from the stated definitions that they can be the result only of ideas carried in the mind as to what rural associations should be.<sup>8</sup>

Rural community studies reflect the authors' preconceptions of what rural association should be rather than picturing the actual working arrangements of the everyday world. It is quite impossible to explain on scientific grounds the continuing emphasis on community delineation. Community studies of the type sponsored in recent years violate both in method and in aim all that has been proved by past experience. In the absence of conclusive demonstrations that communities are widespread and ubiquitous, it is logical to begin local studies with individuals. Some points of orientation can be established by determining individual aspirations, associations, values, taboos, and activities in general. After an adequate sampling of individual patterns it should become clear how a local group operates and where the prime forces lie which need to be studied.

Promotional considerations supply in part the basic reasons for the continued emphasis on these definitely outmoded methods and aims in the study of rural society. The community concept has proved popular with many Federal and State action agencies seeking local recognition and support. During the stress of the depression and the application of numerous action programs, the conflicts and inertia confronting administrators were rather formidable and so the new concept served as a "magic talisman" and a sesame to many novitiates struggling with the problem of the day.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In his book, *The Sociology of Rural Life* (New York and London, 1940), T. Lynn Smith avoids this problem by refusing to state a definition of his own and gives the impression that he is not entirely satisfied with the definitions of others.

<sup>6</sup> As early as 1929, J. F. Steiner wrote: "Fortunately, along with this enthusiastic and somewhat blind allegiance to the community as a kind of magic talisman of value in dealing with social problems, there developed in academic circles an effort to define the community more accurately and gain a better conception of its role in social organization." American Sociological Society, *Papers and Proceedings*, 23:21 (Chicago, 1929).

<sup>5</sup> See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Fundamental Concepts of Sociology* (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), translated and supplemented by Charles P. Loomis (New York, 1940).

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Heberle, "The Application of Fundamental Concepts in Rural Community Studies," *Rural Sociology*, 6:203-215 (September 1941). See also Robert Redfield, "Rural Sociology and the Folk Society," *ibid.*, 8:68-71 (March 1943).

<sup>7</sup> Carle C. Zimmerman, *The Changing Community*, 20 (New York, 1938).

In part, this interest also grew out of the emphasis these studies gave to the location and identification of community leaders, who, according to popularized leadership concepts, will, when properly stimulated, lead the people in the desired direction.<sup>10</sup> The prospect of using this simple device or action mechanism for overcoming local inertia or resistance to diverse program activities proved irresistible. Information on how to hold meetings and initiate programs in local areas has become an important byproduct of most community studies.

Folk residues have encouraged this approach to the handling of rural people. Romanticized reflections and a harking back to bygone days when farm and village life was by necessity communal characterize many rural societies and lend superficial support to this approach.

Preconceptions growing out of careful indoctrination which do not lend themselves to ready application in rural areas have led to rather strange assertions in rural sociological studies and reports. Thus, warnings that government programs on the local level will fail because they neglect to recognize the defined communities and leaders are seen in juxtaposition with lamentations over social losses said to come from the failure of revitalizing communities by making them administrative units.<sup>11</sup> The dilemmas would have been avoided had the discipline of rural sociology developed a cumulative experience. The concern with revitalizing the rural community is foremost in the minds of those sociologists who hold that the community is still the center of value-determining forces and, if ignored, society will fly to pieces. They have reached the situation in which largely nonexistent communities (or communities of types which are found infrequently) are thought to be the last strongholds, the seats of authority, and the natural centers of democratic self-government.

To get away from the above confusions requires concentration on the following question: What is the nature of the present-day rural society in the

United States? Modern group associations and actions begin with the individual and lead toward the development of a collective society,<sup>12</sup> whereas in primitive society, participation sprang from the community and moved toward the development of the individual. This is a fact too few rural sociologists have considered. It is a necessary step in the understanding of the structure of the secular world. Doubtless it is correct to emphasize the mystical effect which the primitive tribe, and to a certain extent the collective community, has on its individuals, but it is grossly wrong to attribute such an influence to the rationally built-up aims of the modern collective, functional, or contractual society. It is well to remember that however irrational may be the methods in the rationally organized community, it never approaches completely the state common in the primitive community where actions are on a completely nonrational basis.

It has become conventional to approach new subjects by seeking their manifestations in the past, and it is, therefore, understandable that students of the rural community should begin their study by a careful appraisal of ancient records dealing with rural life. This research, as it has developed about the concept of human association, has seemingly led to the conclusion that certain tendencies and aspects are universal and eternal, that ancient and modern definitions should therefore merge, and that attempts at specific definitions of periods and conditions of relative differences will break down. It may be that there are certain universal aspects to human behavior. But, as Robert Bechtold Heilman has pointed out, "...man escapes consistency by varying his objectives and stresses; the context is the thing. Man is gregarious, say; but there is a difference between a Canterbury Pilgrimage and a Rotary Convention."<sup>13</sup>

It is to this difference, and broad it is, that modern sociologists must address themselves. The old steadfast traits of human personality which link every man to his long and colorful past are well enough known or at least can be left to other sciences. Instead of forming a knothole gang for peeping into the sacred mysteries of the

<sup>10</sup> See T. Wilson Longmore and T. G. Standing, "Developing Local Leadership in Agriculture's War Effort," *Rural Sociology* 9:44-49 (March 1944); Olen Leonard, "Some Efforts of Rural Sociology in the Present War," *ibid.*, 142-151 (June 1944).

<sup>11</sup> Lee Coleman, *Community Organization and Agricultural Planning, Greene County, Georgia* (Atlanta, Ga., U. S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1942).

<sup>12</sup> See Erich Kahler, *Man the Measure: A New Approach to History*, 39 (New York, 1943).

<sup>13</sup> See Robert Bechtold Heilman, "Notes on the Renaissance," *Southern Review*, 7(4):789-803 (Spring 1942).



past, rural sociologists should begin to bare the mysteries of human association in the secular world. Once this fact is seen and understood, much of the confusion so prevalent in recent years over the relation of "community" organization and democracy will clear up. Erich Kahler has said: "Ancient democracy still implies the primeval belonging to the bulk of a pre-individual community that is just in the state of splitting up from a whole into its integral parts, the individuals. Modern democracy signifies protection of primary and private individuals from the demands of an increasingly collective order."<sup>14</sup>

It may be well to follow Kahler a little further, as he explains the rise of the deliberately organized community:

The unfolding of man's relation to the universe develops the human mind. The unfolding of man's relation to the human community develops the human individual. In the first relation, man gradually distinguishes and conceives the objects and beings of the outer world as separate and distinct existences and, in contrast to these outward existences, he discovers his own human existence and soul. And in the subsequent process of transcending, these outward objects and beings gradually become incorporated in the human mind and so in the human world. The world of the human mind expands over greater and greater domains of the objective world with the help of man's capacity to form concepts and to transform reality. In the second relation, the relation to the human community, man begins by distinguishing first his fellow kinsman and then his fellow man from his own gradually perceived personality. This is how the individual evolves. The completion of the individual coincides with his inevitable efforts toward a new, deliberately organized community [a collective].<sup>15</sup>

It is with the individual and the deliberately organized association, or collective, that modern sociologists should increasingly concern themselves. This is the modern form of association. It is the product of a long and troubled history, the history of the development of man as an individual.

Not far off in the shadows of history lie the remnants of former attempts at group life, the tribal family, the primitive community, the polis, the sacred orders, the feudal fold, and, last and most prominent, the community of individuals seeking freedom and independence from group

ties and nevertheless in this act seeking a new form of association. While modern industrial society has moved beyond these common efforts, the world of the deliberately organized community is in its youth. There is no special need for rural sociologists to deal in any great detail with the forms that have passed or are passing into limbo. Archeologists, anthropologists, social historians, and others are dealing with them adequately.

Modern society, characterized as it is by the excesses and eccentricities of an overdeveloped individualism, a longing and frantic search for collective security, as well as many inhibitions, taboos, and uniformities should be the chief concern of the sociologist. It is here that new ground must be broken and new tools developed to break it. So we come back to the question: What is the nature of the present-day rural society in the United States? This is a vastly different question than: What is the nature of rural associations in the United States? It is doubtful that any large number of rural sociologists, considering their preoccupation with the now mythical historical community, are in a position to approach the latter question objectively. They may, however, be able to do so after careful study of the first question, the answer to which involves a study of the growth of individualism with its emphasis on self-interest and free trade and contractual associations. Each study leads directly to an examination of modern battle cries and slogans—Race, Living Room, Americanism, New Way of Life, New Deal, New Order, Socialism, Collectivism, Capitalism, and Individualism.

The complexity of modern life may be repulsive to some as well as evidence of the decay inherent in unchecked individualism. These may be counteracted by all manner of passions for returning to the fold and devices for finding a faith, but they must be faced in all their glaring disunity by students of society. They must be acknowledged if problems of the secular world are to be dealt with realistically. The anatomy of the secular world must be laid bare. Profane subjects must be handled, however repulsive and unfamiliar.

Sociologists interested in rural association patterns will do well to look into the arrangements found helpful in other sciences for the study of modern society. Economists, geographers, anthropologists, social engineers (also propagandists,

<sup>14</sup> Kahler, *Man the Measure*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

advertisers, selling agencies, and news distributors), and many others have developed useful devices for aiding in the analysis of modern methods of living. Sociologists will increasingly desire to work with these groups and to borrow their basic data. Therefore it would be wise to use methods and techniques for sociological investigations which grow out of the experience in other fields. Literature and art also offer valuable source material. Sociologists must make use of this material, just as they should make use of historical data and observation in building up concepts of past societies. The divorce of modern rural sociology from the new interpretations of history and theory of history has been unfortunate. A closer relation would have led to a

conscious only of individual or collective interest, fluid in social structure, aware only of relative answers to social questions and governed by substance, centrifugal, consciously exploitive in relation to nature, technical, etc.

Each of these items forms the axis of a pole, reaching from the sacred to the secular, from the irrational to the rational, etc., and may be graphically portrayed as in the accompanying chart. When we group these individual items, a major axis is formed between the poles on which can be plotted degrees of progression from the sacred to the secular in human associations. Movement along this axis is in both directions. The interplay of forces results in movement first in one direction and then in the other, although many

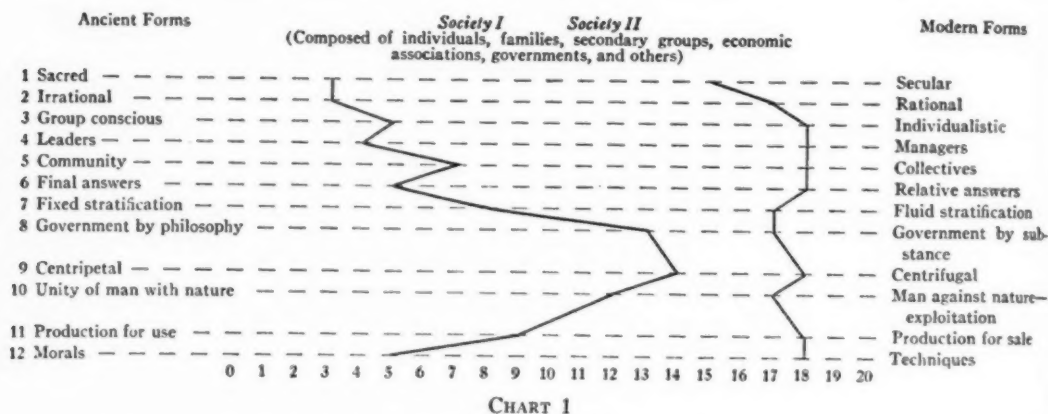


CHART 1

more complete appreciation of the devastating changes in human society made by the discovery of mechanical and electrical devices, not to mention such concepts as individualism and free will.

The nature of modern associations and the way in which they developed may be better understood if we contrast certain of their tendencies with the more signal characteristics of primitive communities. The tribal community (and to a lesser extent the more recent cumulative community) may be characterized as sacred, irrational, group conscious, articulate through the voice of leaders, conscious of community spirit, rigid in social structure and absolute in answer to social questions, governed by philosophies, centripetal, conscious of unity with nature, ethical, etc. Modern associations, or collectives, tend to deviate from these older forms. They may be thought of as embodying the opposite characteristics, being secular, rational, individualistic, organized and run by managers, con-

historians hold that the recorded history of man has marked a slow irregular movement toward those forces which we call "modern," that is, a movement toward the secular world.

When the social study of any area is anticipated, a preliminary charting of the more important social groups, such as the family, secondary association groups, business groups, and aspects of government, according to the degree of progression of various characteristics will result in a tentative ranking of the population group. The composite groupings for two societies are illustrated by the two graph lines on the chart. The society represented by the line nearer the sacred pole may be thought of as a cumulative community, the other as the collective association or functionally differentiated group. It will be observed that these graph lines give some hints as to the stability of the society: the straighter the line, the greater the stability; the more jagged the line, the less the stability and the greater the

evidence of attempts at breaking away from accepted forms, whether they be ancient or modern. This chart should be considered a means to an end, an aid to thinking, and not an end product. Once it becomes established that an association of people approximates the modern or secular pole of the axis, no time or effort should be spent in geographic community delineations, looking for or inventing community leaders, values, or other characteristics of a primitive society. While vestiges of these forms may exist, they are of minor significance.

From the use of these trial charts and other observations, it will be evident that many rural societies are more nearly collectives or functional groupings than primitive or cumulative communities, as these terms have been used throughout this article. The sacred shrines of the primitive community have now been eclipsed in most rural areas of the United States by secular forms. School buildings are now ubiquitous and vital and have largely eclipsed the function of rural churches. With this change has come the transfer of authority from divine and church personnel to profane and mundane personnel associated with schools, banks, cooperatives, trade associations, feed stores, drug stores, beauty parlors, movie palaces, etc. These profound changes foreshadow fundamental shifts in methods, aims, and values in rural societies.

Irrational authoritative guidance expressed through the voice of community leaders or elders has been largely replaced by spokesmen or organizers of more rationally defined groups. The manager of the supply cooperative, the manager of the cold-storage plant, the bank, or the motion-picture house, as well as the county manager are now centers of authority in their respective spheres. In the modern rural society, no one presumes to speak for all people on all subjects. In other words there are no omnipotent leaders. This is one of the radical departures from traditional forms which has given sociologists and others so much worry. Comparing even the recent past with the present day, there is a notable difference. If local history can be trusted, there was no dearth of early leaders or county pillars during pioneer developments in the United States. The present-day historian would find it difficult indeed to locate members of such stature around whom revolve so many vital activities and on whom so many important decisions rest.

Government by divine right usually prevailed in the traditional or primitive community. This was a government of philosophy with only a minimum of intrusion into the physical spheres. Capital crimes were largely those of heresy against God and God-ordained rulers. Modern industrial societies are moving away from these concepts in favor of government of substance rather than government of ideas. Governments of substance intrude themselves more and more into the daily realm of economic activities, attempting to pacify the interests of conflicting groups. Students of society are advised to ponder the question whether governments of substance can attain a state of unification in which all conflicts and competitions are absent. When modern governments meet problems they arrive not with ethical considerations for the ultimate solution of the problems but with programs and goods to check the ruffled feelings of conflicting groups. Thus the government itself participates in a continuous attempt at pacification which does not necessarily lead to a unified end.

The sacred community naturally bespoke a fixed social stratification either by divine right or because of natural law. Selected groups enjoyed positions of privilege, which in turn had strong economic implications. In a day of increasing rationalization we must of necessity question some of the premises which served so well to define class and economic positions in the primitive society. An irrational society could easily explain slavery or the subsistence wages of a charwoman in a nobleman's house. In a rational society the chosen and the potentates do not enjoy such easy security as that afforded by divine right. While economists have taken great pains to rationalize some of the folkways of the feudal society as they appear in modern daily life, they have not demonstrated that rationalization can successfully cover the discrepancies in the distribution of goods in a modern society. Witness the present widespread efforts of governments in industrial societies to equalize the distribution of goods among classes with the consequent upsetting of traditional class structures. In modern society, the class structure is fluid, as indicated in the chart, but nonetheless powerful and important in determining actions.<sup>16</sup> These actions

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, N. S. Timasheff, "Vertical Social Mobility in Communist Society," *American Journal of Sociology*, 50:9-21 (July 1944).



find their influence and their balance (or imbalance) in the conflicts of interest groups, many of which seek expression through governmental agencies. Thus the pole formed by the sacred and secular forces in society may become a major guide to sociologists studying human activities.

A recent article by Fred H. Blum provides a good summary for this discussion. It reads in part as follows:

According to Max Weber, modern science is seeking to free itself from value judgments. Science which does not know ideals and which leaves the choice of ideals up to the individual, science which claims freedom from value judgments, is a modern phenomenon; it is the product of the "process of rationalization."

This process characterizes the whole evolution of society since the "decay of the primitive outlook on the world." Rationalization means dissolution of all *gemeinschaftlichen* structures. *Gesellschaft* ("heterogeneous society"), in contrast to *Gemeinschaft* ("homogeneous community"), is characterized by a rational

adjustment of interests. The essence of the process of rationalization is the compartmentalization of all spheres of life, the secularization of society, with its counterpart the "dissociation of the human soul," and, last but not least, the "disenchantment of the world." The outcome of the process is a "rational, subjective culture," that is, a cultural pattern in which the spheres of life are split: religious life, business life, family life, community life—all separated and having conflicting values. These values are not given by authority but have to be chosen by the individual himself.<sup>17</sup>

Not only does the individual choose his own values, but he chooses his own interests and associates. Once these facts of the world we live in are recognized, sociologists will have gone a long way toward answering the question: What is the nature of present-day rural society in the United States?

<sup>17</sup> Fred H. Blum, "Max Weber's Postulate of 'Freedom' from Value Judgments," *ibid.*, 46.

## MILITARY BOUNTY LANDS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

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The bounty-land policy of the Revolutionary War has often been criticized on two accounts.<sup>1</sup> Historians seem to agree that the measures adopted did not serve their primary purpose of establishing deserving and needy veterans on farms of their own. Almost 20 years of peace went by before the first titles to bounty lands could be conveyed, and during this long delay most of the land warrants had found their way into the hands of speculators and land scouts. Only those veterans who could afford to wait or had pooled their claims were able to reap at least some of the intended benefits. Regarding its second objective, namely an orderly advance of settlement into the new western lands, the military bounty land policy of the United States is held to have failed just as signally. The insistent demands of old veterans and their heirs and assignees forced practically every administration between 1812 and 1862 to relax the stipulations and extend the date lines for the establishment of military claims. The central land office continued to honor these claims up to the

end of the nineteenth century in considerable numbers. By that time, between 70 and 100 million acres had been assigned for army warrants of the Revolutionary war and that of 1812 alone, largely on the basis of laws passed as late as 1847 and 1855. If the total of "All Land in Farms" within the four "central" State groups as given in the Census of 1900 is fairly indicative of the farm acreage occupied during the previous hundred years of westward expansion, the military bounty lands alone comprise one-seventh to one-sixth of this acreage.<sup>2</sup> All these lands were acquired, of course, by the bounty claimants without cost.

<sup>2</sup>The land-bounty policy of the Revolutionary War is treated in a general way in Payson Jackson Treat, *The National Land System 1785-1820*, p. 232-246, 260-262 (New York, 1910); Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies*, 117-118, 126-129 (New York, 1924); and Thomas Donaldson, *The Public Domain*, 232-234 (Washington, 1884). The only exhaustive and penetrating study is that of William Thomas Hutchinson, *The Bounty Lands of the Revolution in Ohio*, doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, June 1927. It is deeply to be regretted that this work is not available in print. The author had access to it only after most of his own research was completed.

<sup>1</sup>This article is a redaction of a paper presented at the joint meeting of the Agricultural History Society with the American Historical Association at Chicago on Dec. 28, 1944.

The incipient stages in the development of this system are said to have had the effect of accustoming the people to "the idea of the government giving away public land."<sup>3</sup> This statement bespeaks the widely held opinion that the westward movement was caused by economic and social forces of overwhelming strength. Consequently, laws and administrative acts are accorded only secondary importance; they must either suit the interests of the pioneer, or be abandoned, or rendered ineffective in some other way. Bounty-land legislation may be viewed as an instance where the original purpose of rewarding the veteran for his services was transformed gradually and unwittingly into a means for helping the people of the frontier to achieve their goal of "free land."

It may be doubted, however, whether this interpretation does not oversimplify the matter. Although the bounty-land policy failed to achieve its intended purposes, nevertheless it contributed to a really remarkable degree toward setting the patterns and erecting the signposts for at least the earlier stages of the westward movement. The cession of western lands, the rules governing the administration of the Northwest Territory and its lands, the preferment of the survey principle over indiscriminate location, and last but not least the first settlements on the Ohio River are cases in point. Furthermore, the question may be raised whether the final stages of the westward movement permit a proper perspective concerning legislation which was forged in the crucible of a fateful war and its hardly less fateful aftermath. Are we to believe that the framers of these laws failed to appraise properly the character and the strength of the forces destined to push open the gate to the promised lands of the west? Did they try to impede these forces by virtue of a narrow and "eastern" conception of the future? And can the colorful and fascinating interplay of personalities, ideas, and events which marked the incipient steps of the land policy of the United States be accorded its proper weight when viewed as but an awkward prelude to the grandiose spectacle of the westward movement?

The recent war and victory have made all Americans conscious of the grave problem of the returning veteran. It is easier for us, therefore, than for peacetime generations to understand the anxiety felt by the Founding Fathers and their

helpers on this account. But a still more vexing problem which has no present-day counterpart confronted them and called for immediate solution. Independence had thrown into the lap of a none-too-perfect union the vast and unsettled area between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. It was but natural that the deserving and needy soldiers should expect to receive land in this region. But this prospect was by no means the only stake which the veteran hoped to have in the opening of the west. In the newly won territory, a novel type of colonial government and administration was to be established, in which the veterans, and especially the officers, claimed their due share. Some of them, chiefly from New England, held decided opinions as to the principles which they wished to see incorporated in the new western set-up for their own benefit and that of a strong federal union. Their views were certain to be challenged by Southerners, though adherence to either camp was not necessarily determined by regional interests and outlooks alone. However, some of the basic issues involved in the future administration and land policies of the new west had been tackled, and in part decided, long before the war ended. An early promise of the Continental Congress to the rank and file of its army brought them to a head.

Curiously enough, land was first promised by Congress, in August 1776, to Hessians and other foreigners if they would desert from the English army, but nothing much came of it.<sup>4</sup> The story of the military bounty lands really began somewhat later when Congress decided to offer land to its own nationals as an inducement for enlisting in the new army and for permanent service. The ill-fated summer campaigns of 1776 made it depressingly clear to everybody concerned that the war could not be waged successfully unless the militia was replaced, at least for the purposes of sustained warfare, by an army of regulars who were willing to serve without interruption until victory was won. This was a radical departure from

<sup>3</sup>Amelia Clewley Ford, *Colonial Precedents of Our National Land System as It Existed in 1800*, p. 108 (Madison, Wis., 1910).

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Continental Congress, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, edited by Worthington C. Ford, 5:653-655. Hereafter, the 34 volumes of this work (Washington, 1904-37) are cited as *Journals*. Benjamin Franklin to Thomas McKean, Aug. 24, 1776, and to Horatio Gates, Aug. 28, 1776, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 2:59-60, 63 (Washington, 1923). Hereafter, the 8 volumes of this work (Washington, 1921-36) are cited as *Letters*.

previous practices, and it was clear that substantial rewards had to be offered to achieve the change from temporary to permanent enlistment. Therefore, when Congress decided in September 1776 to establish 88 regiments on State lines to serve during the war, the former money bounty of \$20 was augmented by promises of land, ranging from 100 acres for a private to 500 acres for a colonel. The land was to be provided by the United States, and the expenses connected therewith were to be borne by the States in the same proportion as the other expenses of the war.<sup>5</sup>

These resolutions had been contested hotly in Congress before they were passed, but their execution caused still greater concern. The New England States believed that the land bonus was not sufficient to overcome the aversion to enlistment; civilians and soldiers complained, it was said, of the long engagement as a contract of servitude. These States wanted, therefore, to raise the money bounty, especially for privates, and passed acts to this effect in their assemblies.<sup>6</sup> Maryland protested that it had no land of its own and thought that it would have to buy land for bounties from other States. Its council of safety proposed to raise the money bounty to the Maryland line by \$10 instead of offering land. This caused consternation in the Continental Congress where it was feared that this precedent might break the back of all North America. Maryland was officially assured that it would not have to make good the bounty grants in its individual capacity because it was the intention of Congress to provide the bounty lands at the expense of the United States. But Maryland would not recant; and in order to mollify it as well as the New England States, Congress finally permitted enlistment for 3 years under the money bounty system and reserved the land bounty to those soldiers and

officers who signed up for the full duration of the war or until they were honorably discharged.<sup>7</sup>

Maryland's decided stand against the land bounty was by no means motivated by petty considerations; this State made it abundantly clear that much larger issues were involved. To an earlier suggestion that land might be bought for \$3 per hundred, Maryland's delegates had replied "that an Expectation was formed by the People of our State that what was conquered from an Enemy at the joint Expence of Blood and Treasure of the whole should become their joint property but as Claims had been set up opposite to our Ideas of natural Justice it became a wise people rather to prepare for the worst by giving ten Dollars now than trust to the mercy of a few Venders from whom they would be obliged to purchase... at any price, the Case of all Monopolies..." And shortly after the compromise of a 3-year alternative enlistment had been reached, Maryland urged Congress not to close the door on its request "that the back lands acquired from the Crown of *Great Britain* in the present war, should be a common stock for the benefit of the *United States*..."<sup>8</sup>

Though this motion was not carried, the long struggle over the cession of western lands had commenced. While it lasted, Maryland's and even more so Virginia's moves were largely motivated and conditioned by the bounty-land question. In order to "remove the ostensible cause" of Maryland's anxiety to share in the common property of the western lands and its subsequent refusal to join the Confederation, the Virginia Assembly offered in December 1779 "to furnish lands out of their territory on the north west side of the Ohio river, without purchase money, to the troops on continental establishment of such of the confederated states as had not unappropriated

<sup>5</sup>Resolution of Sept. 16, 1776 in *Journals*, 5:762-763. For an appraisal of the military events leading to these steps, see especially the circular letter of the President of Congress (John Hancock) to the New Hampshire Assembly, Sept. 24, 1776, in *Letters*, 2:98-100; and the special plea for the land bounty in the letter of Washington, Sept. 2, 1776, to the President of Congress in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, Series 5, 2:120-121 (Washington, 1851).

<sup>6</sup>William Hooper to the President of the North Carolina Convention, Nov. 16, 1776, in *Letters*, 2:154-155. Cf. also the letters of John Adams, William Williams, and Josiah Bartlett in *ibid.*, 57, 61, 85, 89.

<sup>7</sup>Resolutions of Congress, Oct. 30 and Nov. 12, 1776 in *Journals*, 6:912-913, 945. New Jersey and Delaware soon fell in line with Maryland for the same reasons. *Letters*, 3:450.

<sup>8</sup>See Benjamin Rumsey's letter to James Tilghman, Oct. 24, 1776, in *Letters*, 2:140 n.; Sam'l Chase's letter to the Council of Safety of Maryland, in *American Archives*, Series 5, 3:787-788. As to the suggestion that Maryland should buy land, presumably from Virginia, see Jefferson to Edmund Pendleton, Aug. 13, 1776, in *Letters*, 2:48; and the excerpt of a letter from Pendleton to James Madison, in *Journals*, 5:505 n.



lands for that purpose. . . ."<sup>9</sup> This offer hardly substantiates Maryland's suspicion of the grasping ambition of its big neighbor. Regardless of whether Virginia's generosity or Maryland's insistence can rightly be called the keystone of the Confederation, there is little doubt that the bounty resolutions of Congress in 1776 must be credited with having inaugurated the train of events which eventually led to perpetual union.<sup>10</sup>

Virginia's "Remonstrance" was only the first step toward actual cession. In the long haggling over the terms under which Virginia was to renounce its claims to the territory across the Ohio River, the bounty lands proved one of the main stumbling blocks. Holding immense tracts of unappropriated land, Virginia had very soon adopted the idea suggested by Congress of granting land bounties to its officers and soldiers, both on the State and continental establishment. And being more able to do so, Virginia was more liberal than Congress with grants. By October 1779, all its officers had been granted ten times, noncoms four times, and privates two times as much land as Congress had stipulated; a year later all bounties were increased by one-third, and new ones were added for generals (following congressional precedent); and in 1782 further increases and bounties for 3-year enlistments were granted. George Rogers Clark and his men had been promised

lands in the trans-Ohio region that they were to wrest from the English. Finally, a land office created at Richmond in 1779 was charged with the administration and execution of military bounty warrants and of all other claims pertaining to the unappropriated lands of the State. This step had been greatly resented by Maryland and the other landless States because any definite arrangements made by Virginia might render it still more difficult to obtain its consent to the cession of the northwestern territory under reasonable terms.<sup>11</sup>

Most important of all, as early as December 1778, Virginia had set aside an extensive tract in western Kentucky from which to supply its line officers and soldiers with land.<sup>12</sup> This military reserve became the source of many vexations. When the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina was extended, part of this district fell south of the line. In its final cession offer on January 2, 1781, Virginia stipulated, therefore, that in case the quantity of good lands which it had reserved southeast of the Ohio River proved insufficient, the deficiency should be made up in good lands to be laid off between the Scioto and Little Miami rivers northwest of the Ohio. Even after this clause and the cession had been accepted on March 1, 1784, Congress delayed final action in the matter, until Virginia could prove that its supply of "good land" southeast of the Ohio had really been exhausted. The Senate and the House finally settled the matter by an act of August 10, 1790; the first titles to land in the Military Reserve of Virginia northwest of the Ohio were conveyed in 1791, almost 8 years after peace had been declared and more than 6 years after Virginia had ceded its northwestern territories.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>For the bounty laws, see Hening, *Statutes*, 10:24, 27, 160, 331, 375, 11:559-565. On Clark, see Hening, *Statutes*, 10:26, and Rowland, *George Mason*, 1:290, for the first land promise to Clark. On the land office, see Hening, *Statutes*, 10:50-65; and Abernethy, *Western Lands*, 217-229.

<sup>12</sup>Hening, *Statutes*, 10:55n.; Rowland, *George Mason*, 1:310.

<sup>13</sup>For Virginia's offer, see Hening, *Statutes*, 10:564-566. Hening claimed that the term "Virginia" troops included all troops, both on continental and Virginia's own establishment. For Virginia's cession and the opening of Virginia Military Reserve to Virginia claimants, see Clarence E. Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 2:6-9, 296-298 (Washington, 1934). Hereafter cited as *Territorial Papers*. For the documents relating to the

<sup>9</sup>William Waller Hening, *The Statutes-at-Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia*, 10:559 (Richmond, 1822). Hereafter cited as Hening, *Statutes*. The word "ostensible" is italicized in the original, the less ostensible causes of Maryland's stand being, in the opinion of the Virginia Assembly, its backing of the land claims of several big land companies. For the part played by the land question in the Virginia Assembly in 1778-79, see Kate Mason Rowland, *The Life of George Mason, 1725-1792*, 1:320-29, 340-44, 359-67 (New York, 1892); Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *Western Lands and the American Revolution*, 242-247 (New York, 1937); Shaw Livermore, *Early American Land Companies*, 109-110 (New York, 1939).

<sup>10</sup>Herbert B. Adams, *Maryland's Influence upon Land Cessions to the United States*, 22-40 (Baltimore, 1885) where the "ostensible cause" is also discussed. Hutchinson, *The Bounty Lands of the Revolution in Ohio*, 21, says that the very important consequences of Maryland's stand have often been emphasized but that its inception of the resistance to the Military Bounty Act of 1776 seems to have been overlooked. Treat, *The National Land System*, 234, and Adams, *Maryland's Influence*, 48, hint at this connection without, however, developing its importance.

In the protracted struggle over Virginia's claims to bounty lands across the Ohio River, two major issues were involved. The first related to the methods of locating warrants. According to the Land Ordinance of 1785, the lands of the Northwest Territory had to be surveyed and subdivided into rectangular townships and sections before warrants could be located and titles conveyed. An exception was the Virginia Military Reserve,<sup>14</sup> because it was to be settled under Virginia laws which allowed the warrant holder to locate his land himself and to have it surveyed afterward in any shape he and the surveyor thought suitable. Under this practice, good lands, especially the river bottoms, were taken up rapidly. Newcomers pushed farther and farther into the wilderness in search of good lands without bothering about the nearer but second-rate stretches. Thus, new regions quickly became dotted with widely scattered and often unconnected settlements. Determined to give its soldiers the full advantages of "indiscriminate location," Virginia needed large areas in order to satisfy them. This explains why Virginia insisted on making "good land" the measure of its claims to large tracts on both sides of the Ohio and why it grew impatient over the long delay in admitting claimants to its reserve northwest of the river.

In these clashes the ever-present conflict between the North and the South played an important part, though mostly behind the scenes. The Land Ordinance of 1785, just as the famed Ordinance of 1787 for the northwestern territory, was widely hailed as a victory for the decided preference of New Englanders for compact settlement and rectangular surveys. Certain groups of New England officers took the lead in the settlement and administration of the new territory, largely through the Ohio Company. These men feared that the Virginians and their ways would prove a disturbing element once they took up lands in the reserve under the laws of their Mother State. The settlers who eventually entered the Virginia Reserve from the south quickly succeeded in taking up the best lands and soon began to play their full and vigorous part in the political life of the territory and the ascendancy of Ohio to state-

hood.<sup>15</sup> However, the veterans of the Revolutionary War had a comparatively small share in all this because many of them had tired of the long delay and sold their claims to enterprising Easterners who in time did a thriving business in locating and selling Ohio lands.

Only a few days after the terms of the preliminary peace had been ratified, a shrewd observer in Congress wrote to an eminent officer: "Our circumstances afford an odd Contrast to those we have heretofore experienced. The Difficulty which heretofore oppres'd us was how to raise an Army. The one which now embarrasses is how to dissolve it."<sup>16</sup> Two months later, mutinous soldiers forced Congress to flee from Philadelphia to Princeton. In this open revolt, the officers had not taken part, but they too were discontented and irritable. They hesitated to resort to desperate means, at least as long as there was hope that Congress would act in their favor. In December 1782 they had presented the last of a long list of memorials to that body. This petition demanded the prompt settlement of arrearages and the commutation of half pay for life, promised in 1780, into a lump sum of money to be paid on discharge. Congress had sent a committee to investigate, but having no resources of its own it could only recommend speedy action to the States; but they were slow in adopting appropriate measures. Deeply disturbed by rumors of the approaching peace, even the officers' restraint threatened to give way to open rebellion.

Matters came to a head in early March 1783 at Newburgh. An anonymous officer addressed his comrades in these incendiary terms: "... while the swords you wear are necessary for the defence of America, what have you to expect from peace, when your voice shall sink, and your strength dissipate by division?... Can you then consent to be the only sufferers by this revolution, and retiring from the field, grow old in poverty, wretchedness and contempt?... If you can—GO—and carry with you the jest of Tories, and the

<sup>15</sup>The literature and source material pertaining to the early phases of political life in the Northwest Territory is too extensive to be cited here. For two excellent and comprehensive treatments with copious references, see Beverly W. Bond, Jr., *The Civilization of the Old Northwest* (New York, 1934), and *The Foundations of Ohio (The History of the State of Ohio)*, ed. by Carl Wittke, v. 1, Columbus, 1941).

<sup>16</sup>Richard Peters to Baron Steuben, Apr. 23, 1783, in *Letters*, 7:150 (Washington, 1934).

"good land" issue, see *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive*, ... *Lands*, 1:1-3, 12-13, 17 (Washington, 1834).

<sup>14</sup>*Territorial Papers*, 2:18.

scorn of Whigs—the ridicule, and what is worse, the pity of the world. Go, starve, and be forgotten!" And then followed a dire threat: "... the slightest mark of indignity from Congress now, must operate like the grave, and part you [and Congress] forever: that in any political event, the army has its alternative. If peace, that nothing shall separate you from your arms but death: if war, that . . . you will retire to some unsettled country, smile in your turn, and 'mock when their fear cometh on.'"

Here indeed were the seeds of a serious revolt. The officers were exhorted not to lay down their arms until Congress granted their demands; and if Congress refused an exodus into the western lands was to be the ultimate answer. No doubt, the addresses made a deep impression upon the officers of the cantonment. But at a meeting of their delegates Washington himself unexpectedly appeared. In a speech which moved some of his hearers to tears he reiterated his belief that Congress, though moving slowly, would eventually do full justice to the wishes of the army. He then solemnly pledged his own support in every way which was consistent with his duty to his country. This appeal dissuaded the officers from their dangerous course and set them once more upon the road to orderly appeal, strongly seconded by their commander in chief.<sup>17</sup>

Congress acted quickly and agreed to commute the promise of half pay for life into a sum in gross amounting to 5 years' full pay in money or securities such as those given to the other creditors of the United States. By virtue of this last clause which shows Alexander Hamilton's hand in drawing up the resolutions, the money and pension claims of the army would be treated in exactly the same way as the claims of any other creditor upon the exchequer of the United States. One month later, the proceeds from special imposts on foreign liquors, sugar, etc., a general duty of 5 percent on imports, and contributions from the States were assigned to the service of the total public debt; it is significant that a proposal to appropriate the 5-percent duty to the army claims alone was not adopted at the time. Neither were any provisions

made to satisfy the land bounties, the obvious reason being that the cessions of western lands had not been completed. Their consummation was urged in order to hasten the extinguishment of the debts.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the officers themselves had not asked Congress to attend to the land-bounty matter; they had concentrated on obtaining the commutation of their pensions into hard cash. The seeds of the Newburgh addresses were to ripen in this respect also. The appeal to migrate to the west and begin a new semimilitary life there had not fallen on deaf ears, for this idea had been talked about previously,<sup>19</sup> and its combination with the bounty-land question produced a move which was destined to have far reaching, if slowly maturing, consequences. Soon after the Newburgh incident, two of the main actors on the scene, Quartermaster Timothy Pickering and Brigadier General Rufus Putnam, together with Brigadier General Jejediah Huntington, were hard at work trying to turn the insidious counsel of the "fellow soldier" into a positive scheme which would utilize the promised bounty lands and other land grants for the establishment of a new state for veterans on the Ohio. By April 1783, elaborate propositions for the settling of such a commonwealth were drawn up for the benefit of those officers and men who were willing to join an association to be founded for the purpose. These propositions called for concerted action along the following lines: purchase by the United States of a tract corresponding roughly to the present State of Ohio; prompt assignment of the bounty lands promised by Congress during the war; grants of additional and larger tracts but with the same scaling as the bounty lands to actual settlers in the purchased district; payment of the initial expenses of settlement and subsistence for 3 years from arrearages due to the members of the association; the preparation of a constitution previous to going west which would exclude slavery; and prompt admittance of this state to the Confederation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup>*Journals*, 24:257-261.

<sup>19</sup>*Pickering*, 1:456-461, 546-549. The merits of the Ohio country as a military refuge had been discussed by Washington and his officers during the war. See William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, *Life, Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler*, 1:141-144 (Cincinnati, 1888). Hereafter cited as *Manasseh Cutler*.

<sup>20</sup>*Pickering*, 1:546-549; *Manasseh Cutler*, 1:149, 156-159.

<sup>17</sup>For the Newburgh addresses, see *Journals*, 24:291-311. See also Louis Clinton Hatch, *The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army*, 142-181, 198-199 (New York, 1904); Octavius Pickering, *The Life of Timothy Pickering*, 1:406-429 (Boston, 1867), contains correspondence concerning John Armstrong's authorship of the addresses. Hereafter cited as *Pickering*.



This ambitious plan drew from the supposed author of the Newburgh addresses the caustic remark: "... this quixotic idea. It originates with men who wish only to amuse and divert the army from the consideration of more important concerns. They ask, what can not be granted. 'Tis absurd."<sup>21</sup> Whatever sentiments John Armstrong harbored, he was right. Pickering and Putnam had simply proposed that the United States should purchase the tract for the new state from the natives, thereby ignoring, probably intentionally, the thorny problem of the cession of Virginia's northwestern claims. For this and perhaps other reasons, the final petition, signed in June 1783 by almost three hundred officers from New England, merely asked Congress to "assign and mark it out as a Tract or Territory suitable to form a distinct Government (or Colony of the United States) in time to be admitted" to the Confederation and to make provisions for the location and survey of the bounty lands promised.<sup>22</sup>

The petition was sent properly to the commander in chief first, accompanied by a lengthy letter from Putnam. The rugged soldier and pioneer stressed the paramount importance of the Ohio River region as a bastion against England and Spain and the necessity of securing the frontier by a string of forts in order to keep the Indians in check. He then proceeded to voice the expectations of the officers which had been deemed improper to mention in the petition. His comrades, Putnam explained, did not expect to be under any obligation to settle on the bounty lands; if, however, Congress made further and larger grants of land, many were determined to become actual settlers on the Ohio. Putnam went on to emphasize that at least some of the officers held rather decided views as to the manner in which these new lands should be distributed and administered. They were, he declared, much opposed to monopoly and wished to guard against large patents granted to individuals; they hoped, therefore, that no grants would be made except by townships 6 miles square (or multiples), to be subdivided by the proprietor associates themselves and administered after the pattern of a New England town. This township principle was also to apply to private purchasers of land in the region.

<sup>21</sup>John Armstrong to Horatio Gates, Apr. 22, 1783, in *Letters*, 7:150 n.

<sup>22</sup>*Manasseh Cutler*, 1:159-160. This document has often been regarded as the first step leading to the founding of the New England Ohio Company.

Washington forwarded the petition and Putnam's letter to Congress on June 17, 1783, and he himself urged the speedy adoption of the army plan, because its execution would connect the government with the frontier, extend settlements progressively, and plant in the new lands a brave, hardy, and respectable race of people always willing to combat the savages. Despite this endorsement, no action was taken on the proposal by Congress either then or later. During the turbulent days of the insurrection of the Pennsylvania troops, Congress referred the petition to a standing committee, had it read in Congress a week later, and referred back to another special committee which was discharged on October 15, 1783. Upon a pressing inquiry from Putnam, more than a year later, Washington blamed the "want of cession of the land to act upon" as the chief reason for the delay. He was vaguely hopeful that something might be done yet, because the Virginia cession had been accepted, but the plan was never revived in its original form.<sup>23</sup>

Manifestly, it was futile to expect action from Congress in the matter of the bounty lands as long as the squabble over the cessions and their execution lasted. Moreover, Putnam and his comrades had encumbered their plans with political aspirations of pronounced character the open discussion of which would certainly upset the delicate balance of a none-too-perfect union. However, they did plant the proverbial mustard seed when they urged their fellow officers and land claimants to form a voluntary association with the characteristics of a corporate body. True, the idea of a pioneering land corporation was neither new nor without precedent.<sup>24</sup> But only the critical times of the 1780s had engendered strong enough group sentiments to keep this basic feature of the army plan alive, when all other proposals had to be given up. Eight years of war and camp life had rendered many officers unfit for the old ways of life; they were impoverished and despaired of ever again succeeding in living up to the civilian Joneses.

<sup>23</sup>Correspondence in *Manasseh Cutler*, 1:167-177. For the action in Congress, see *Journals*, 24:421 n. The Grand Committee mentioned had been appointed on May 30, 1783, "to consider of the best manner of carrying into execution the engagements of the United States for certain allowances of land to the Army at the conclusion of the war." *Journals*, 24:376.

<sup>24</sup>See the introduction by Albert C. Bates, in *The Two Putnams, Israel and Rufus . . .* (Hartford, Conn., 1931); Livermore, *Early American Land Companies*, 97-102.



On the other hand, the long comradeship in arms had imbued many officers with an esprit de corps which persisted and proved of great psychological value in the troubled times of war and peace alike.

Finally, many believed that the western lands were the destined proving ground for the political principles of independence, self-government, and personal liberty for which the war had been fought. Thus, the lands on the Ohio beckoned with the lure of still another Utopia. In these empty expanses would rise a new community from the seeds of a corporation of New England veterans who had forged their swords into plowshares.

These feelings and expectations, though seldom voiced by the tight-lipped backers of the original army plan, prevented the idea of a pioneering land corporation from vanishing. After 3 years of casting their weights about in various western enterprises, Rufus Putnam and Benjamin Tupper finally launched the Ohio Company of New England which included officers and men who were destined to play a vital part in the opening of Ohio. In the financial and corporate set-up of the company, military bounty claims again loomed conspicuously, and in the early life of Marietta, the first settlement on the Ohio River, some of the dreams of the army plan of 1783 came true.<sup>25</sup>

The very same routine procedure which buried the army plan in congressional committees obliterated yet another scheme designed to satisfy the soldiers' demands for their bounty lands. Introduced by Theodorick Bland and seconded by Alexander Hamilton, this scheme is of interest here chiefly because it seems to have been a counterproposal to the army plan, though it foreshadows in some respects the system of land sales in Hamilton's famous public credit report of 1790. The plan as presented to Congress in 1783 proposed to merge the army's land claims with the commuted half pay and arrearages, every dollar of which was to be considered equal to a claim for 30 acres of land. The combined land grants were to be assigned within the vacant territory ceded by Great Britain, where districts 2 degrees wide and 3

<sup>25</sup>For these special aspects of the beginnings of the Ohio Company, see *Manasseh Cutler*, 1:178-197; Archer Butler Hulbert, ed., *The Records of the Original Proceedings of the Ohio Company* (Marietta, Ohio, 1917); Joseph Stancliffe Davis, *Essays in the Earlier History of American Corporations*, 1:130-145 (Cambridge, Mass., 1917); Livermore, *Early American Land Companies*, 134-146.

degrees long, subdivided into townships, were to be laid out. Finally, the United States was to reserve 10,000 acres out of every 100,000 granted as common and unalienable property, their revenues to be used for military and educational purposes. This plan represented one of the several attempts of the "financiers" to fund at least the army debt in toto. It also reflected the fear of the advocates of a strong central government that a new state might upset the delicate balance of the Thirteen Original States, and it combined both political and financial motives in the proposal that the Union keep a permanent interest in the western lands and their future development.<sup>26</sup>

The Bland proposals hinged directly upon the acceptance of the Virginia cession. Indeed, no move in the matter of the promised bounty lands was possible until the United States had acquired clear title to the western lands. As soon as this was accomplished, a gust of fresh air seemed to give new life to this and other questions concerning the future land policy of the United States. The Virginians took the lead, and among them Thomas Jefferson emerged as the leading spirit. True, he did not concern himself much with the bounty-land issue proper; nevertheless, his broad and general approach to the problems of the new west provided a principal solution for this question, albeit one which obliterated most of its political implications. Under his leadership, the legislative framework for the northwestern territory and its administration progressed so far that the lines for future action appeared securely drawn, even though many important changes might occur in carrying out his more detailed plans.

In this respect, one accomplishment stands out clearly before others. Congress agreed (and never deviated from this course) to deal with the problems of the northwest under two headings: the one relating to the form and powers of government, and the other relating to the disposal of land within the territory. This trend of affairs is clearly shown by the sequence of events after Virginia's deed of cession had been accepted on March 1, 1784. On the very same day, Jefferson laid before Congress his proposals for the "Temporary Government of the Northwestern Territory" which had

<sup>26</sup>Motion of Theodorick Bland, seconded by Alexander Hamilton, referred to Grand Committee, June 5, 1783, in *Journals*, 24:384-386. *The Bland Papers*, ed. by Charles Campbell (Petersburg, Va., 1840-43), are silent on this subject; see, however, *ibid.*, 2:104-106; and *Letters*, 7:143.

been under consideration by a committee for some time. They provided for the creation and administration of several western territories of rectangular shape and about equal size, established the procedure for their advancing to full statehood and membership in the Union, stipulated the republican form of government, forbade the admittance of citizens with hereditary titles, and abolished slavery after 1800. With the two last mentioned provisions stricken out, these proposals became law on April 23, 1784, but they were never put into effect. The unsettled conditions in the West prevented their early application, and in July 1787, the famous government ordinance for the Northwest Territory was passed which cast Jefferson's ideas, though with important alterations, in a new and permanent form.<sup>27</sup> On April 30, 1784, Jefferson laid before Congress "An Ordinance for ascertaining the mode of locating and disposing of lands in the western territory," the logical sequel and counterpart to the government ordinance just passed. In a measure, the land ordinance shared the fate of its twin; it was assigned to a committee, read in Congress again in the spring of 1785, referred to still another committee from which it emerged in the new and final dress of the renowned Land Ordinance of May 20, 1785.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of course and propriety, the military bounty lands are dealt with in both Jefferson's draft and the Land Ordinance of 1785. However, there seems reason to believe that the broader and political implications of the land-bounty issue were not entirely absent from Jefferson's mind when he drew up the Ordinance of 1784.

The disturbed conditions in the Northwest made it necessary that Congress decide on matters of government first and separately. The Indian claims had to be acquired by Congress, but it seemed impossible that this body should also supervise and enforce the execution of the respective treaties with the Indian tribes. Consequently, the delineation of the territory and its subdivisions as well as the establishment of proper authorities

<sup>27</sup>On the cession, see *Journals*, 26:112-117. For the Government Ordinance, see *ibid.*, 118-120, 247-252; and *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Paul L. Ford, 3:407-410, 429-432, 471. Hereafter this 10-volume work (New York, 1892-99) is cited as *Jefferson, Writings*. For the Ordinance of 1787, see *Territorial Papers*, 2:39-50.

<sup>28</sup>For the draft, see *Journals*, 26:324-330, 27:446-453; *Jefferson, Writings*, 3:475-483. For the Land Ordinance of 1785, see *Territorial Papers*, 2:12-18.

there became more pressing. Likewise, the eager settlers could not be allowed to move into a political vacuum, as the troublesome squatters across the Ohio had done. They had to be made responsible for law and order from the very beginning, and this entailed the framing of governmental rules in advance of their coming. In spite of the expediency of framing a government ordinance first and leaving the land law until later, there still remains the possibility, and even the probability, that Jefferson's move was designed to serve his political ideas also. There seems little doubt that the fight against the Society of the Cincinnati raging at the time prompted him to insist on equal male suffrage in the formation of truly democratic governments within the territory and to insert in his ordinance a clause barring citizens with hereditary titles from settling there.<sup>29</sup> In all probability, he was also aware of the fact that the prime movers behind the army plan were all prominent Cincinnati. Was the thunderer against the aristocracy of wealth and privilege unaware of the possible danger that a landed gentry might rise in the West whose wealth would be based upon bounty lands and additional land grants from Congress and whose privileges would be but a perpetuation of their military merits and insignia? The great civilian among the Founding Fathers was afraid that there would "continue a distinction between the civil & military which it would be for the good of the whole to obliterate as soon as possible. . . ."<sup>30</sup> To attain this goal, he was resolved that the people should be the sole source of democratic government in the East and in the New West. The political realist would know that matters pertaining to land holding might becloud the purity of this principle when included in the same ordinance. Jefferson may have thought it advisable, therefore, to deal with the modes for acquiring land in a separate body of general rules and routine procedures.

That Jefferson was aware of the political implications of the bounty question is shown by a peculiar clause in his land ordinance draft which prescribed that army warrants should pass as lands, by descent and device, but not by assignment or by survivorship. The prohibition of assignment had its precedent in a resolution passed by Congress

<sup>29</sup>Jefferson to Washington, Apr. 16, 1784, to James Madison, Apr. 25, 1784, and Francis Hopkinson, May 3, 1784, in *Letters*, 7:493-495, 499-500, 511-512, and preface, *ibid.*, xxxviii-xli.

<sup>30</sup>Jefferson, *Writings*, 4:170-175.

on September 20, 1776. Both this resolution and Jefferson's clause were intended to prevent speculation in land warrants. In cases of land holding survivorship applied to joint tenancy under a grant and was regarded in Jefferson's time as a survival of feudalism and incompatible with democratic ideas.<sup>31</sup> Of course, this term must have slipped easily from the pen of the author of the laws against entail and primogeniture. The question here is, why just in the case of the bounty lands? True, these alone were grants whereas all other lands had to be acquired by purchase. But again, why should he be so careful if no possible danger threatened from this direction? However, none of Jefferson's provisions in these matters found a place in the Land Ordinance of 1785. On the contrary this law expressly recognized the right to assign bounty warrants. Nevertheless, his proviso that lands in the new territory should pass in dowry and descent according to gavelkind did become the basis of the first section of the Ordinance of 1787, as he had anticipated.

Pertinent features of Jefferson's two ordinances thus appear to reflect his running fight with military and Federalist circles of New England. By no means, however, did he leave this particular battlefield fully victorious. True, the Ordinance of 1787 upheld most of his cherished principles of democratic government. But his draft for the land ordinance underwent such drastic changes that it finally resembled the original draft in little more than name. Again, we are concerned with the land-bounty issue, this time wrapped up with the controversy about the proper way of promoting actual settlement in the West.

Jefferson's land ordinance plan combined the regular survey with a modified form of indiscriminate location. He wanted the new territory laid off in hundreds 10 geographical miles square, which in turn, were to be subdivided in lots 1 mile square; the hundreds were to be offered either entire or in lots.<sup>32</sup> However, the actual surveying was not to begin at a definite location but with the hundreds most in demand. This provision, of course, was closely tied up with the modes of acquiring title to land in the territory. Upon paying to the treasurer or loan officer an unspecified purchase price in specie, loan office, or debt certificates

or handing over evidences of military rights to lands, the prospective settler would receive a warrant, go out himself to locate it, and describe to the surveyor the particular lot or hundred chosen. The surveyor would then proceed to lay off the land according to these requests and issue certificates of description which finally became the basis of deeds. Jefferson thus favored a rather liberal method of land allotment, albeit within the frame of regular surveys, and accorded no preferential treatment to soldier warrants; it was the idea of first come, first served applied generally.

In all these respects, the final land ordinance differed widely from Jefferson's scheme. First of all, it authorized the business of surveying and disposing of western lands in a definite and not too extensive area on the upper Ohio River where 7 parallel ranges of townships running due north and south were to be laid off completely before being opened to the location of warrants. The townships were to be 6 miles square and subdivided into lots of 640 acres each. The methods adopted for offering the townships either entire or in lots to prospective settlers and the procedures prescribed for securing warrant and title were rather complicated. Some of the features, especially those relating to the participation of the States in the scheme, were repealed in July 1788 without having had much effect. Here it is sufficient to point out the special treatment accorded to the holders of army warrants. As soon as the Seven Ranges were surveyed, the Secretary of War was to withdraw by lot one-seventh of the townships for the use of the late Continental Army; henceforth, military bounty land claims had to be presented to the Secretary of War and be satisfied by him. The remainder of the townships were to be sold by auction at not less than \$1 per acre to be paid in specie or in debt certificates.

In most of these stipulations, the New England viewpoint on the necessity of survey before sale and on more compact settlement and progressive advance into the West had prevailed. In the Seven Ranges it was thought that the United States would acquire a yardstick which would measure and delineate the westward movement in which the veterans would play their due part. In other respects, however, the ordinance clearly represented a compromise between the New England and Southern groups in Congress who had waged a

<sup>31</sup>Livermore, *Early American Land Companies*, 122 n., 225.

<sup>32</sup>See his humorous comments in letter to Hopkinson, May 3, 1784, in *Letters*, 7:511-512.



hard battle in committees and on the floor before the measure was finally passed.<sup>33</sup>

To the holders of bounty claims and to prospective settlers in general, the results of the Ordinance of 1785 were disconcerting. Despite all caution, the Indians remained hostile, the chief geographer fell ill, and after 3 years not more than 4 ranges of townships had been laid off. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Secretary of War received incessant inquiries respecting the lands due the late army. In the spring of 1787, he addressed an urgent appeal to Congress. "Too many," he wrote, "have been compelled, by their necessities, to sell the evidences of their public debt, for a small proportion of the nominal sum. These unfortunate men now consider the lands promised them, as their only resource against poverty, in old age, and therefore are extremely solicitous to receive, immediately, their dues in this respect. . . . Assuming the surveys of the last year, as a data, or even supposing double the quantity will be surveyed annually in future, yet a very long period must elapse before the whole quantity due will be delivered. A period, at which very few of those entitled to the land will be living."<sup>34</sup>

Half a year later, when Congress was prodded into high gear by the proposed sale of land to the Ohio Company, an act was passed setting aside 1,000,000 acres north of the Ohio Company lands and west of the Seven Ranges and another tract at the mouth of the Ohio River for the exclusive purpose of satisfying the military bounties of the late army.<sup>35</sup> But only after 7 more years and after the Indian war had been terminated by the Treaty of Granville was Congress able to stipulate the terms and modes under which these lands would be made available for the army, and then 3 more years elapsed before the first deeds were conveyed.

By an act of June 1, 1796, some of the cumbersome procedures of the Land Ordinance of 1785 were relaxed for the military districts. Townships

5 (instead of 6) miles square were divided into quarters of 4,000 acres each; these were assigned entire and by lot to either a single claimant or to groups of veterans who had pooled their warrants for the purpose, the actual locations of their lands to be left to their own care if they so desired.<sup>36</sup> The effect of these stipulations was that many of the quarter townships were carved up in rather irregular fashion and in about the same way as had been feared from the execution of Jefferson's original plan. On the other hand, the "unmilitary U. S. military district," as it has been called,<sup>37</sup> filled up more quickly than the rectangular sections in the Seven Ranges, thus testifying to the merits of Jefferson's plan as well.

Even this rapid survey shows how slowly and cautiously Congress was compelled to move in the matter of satisfying the land bounties of the Revolution. The first 4 ranges could not be opened to claimants before 1787, the Virginia Reserve remained closed till 1791, and the United States military districts did not welcome the first veteran settlers before 1800. Secretary of War Knox's dire prophecy that "few of those entitled to the land will be living" to see their expectations fulfilled did not come true literally, but the long delay had induced many of the veterans—soldiers and officers alike—to sell not only their certificates for half pay and arrearages but also their bounty warrants. The assignment of warrants, forbidden during the war, became legal in 1788, and this helped to hasten the sale of warrants by their original, and often destitute, holders. It is not necessary to reiterate here the well-known facts concerning the speculative mania which seized the moneyed parts of the Nation after the war and enabled a few persons and firms to reap profits from accumulated certificates and the sales of warrants for western lands. There is, however, need to point to the often forgotten circumstance that the existence of a market in debt certificates and land warrants could and did give to vigorous and enterprising men an opportunity and the means for concerted action of considerable public value and portent, even if they thereby advanced their own fortunes.

<sup>36</sup>For the act of June 1, 1796, see *Statutes at Large*, v. 1, ch. 46. This law supplemented the act of May 18, 1796. *Territorial Papers*, 2:552-557.

<sup>37</sup>Hutchinson, *The Bounty Lands of the Revolution in Ohio*, 136-144, 151.

<sup>33</sup>See *Letters*, 8:vii-x, and the letter from Monroe to Jefferson, 90, Grayson to Washington, 95-97, King to Gerry, 104, Howell to Green, 106, Grayson to Madison, 129-130, and others. For the influence of Timothy Pickering, see *Pickering*, 1:504-512; and Gerry to Pickering, King to Pickering, and Grayson to Pickering, in *Letters*, 8:55, 94, 105-106.

<sup>34</sup>Secretary of War Henry Knox to President of Congress, Apr. 26, 1787, in *Territorial Papers*, 2:27-28.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

## THE EASTWARD MOVEMENT OF CATTLE FROM THE OREGON COUNTRY

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Between the middle of the 1870s and the middle of the 1880s, the cattle business of the Pacific Northwest overflowed its regional boundaries. During those years vast numbers of cattle moved eastward from the ranges of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Of this movement present-day historians have written little, for they have kept their eyes fastened upon another cattle movement that began earlier and lasted longer than the cattle movement from the Oregon Country. So of cowboys and longhorns on trails leading northward from Texas they have told us much; but of cowboys and cattle on trails leading eastward through Idaho they have told us virtually nothing. Yet, despite the general neglect of this subject, the overflow of the cattle country of the Pacific Northwest was a phenomenon of no slight significance. In order to grasp fully its meaning, it is necessary to account for the existence of a cattle surplus in that region, to tell the story of the marketing of that surplus, and to make known the principal consequences of the removal of that surplus from the Far Northwest. To do these things is the aim of this article.

The breeding of cattle in the Pacific Northwest dates from the occupation of that region by fur traders and missionaries,<sup>1</sup> but it was not until an extensive migration of American settlers to the Willamette Valley began—a migration that was well under way by 1843—that cattle entered the Oregon Country in considerable numbers. Thus nearly all the cattle that entered Oregon in those early years went overland from the Eastern States; the Spanish or Texas strain in early Oregon herds was very slight indeed. During the 1840s and the 1850s, cattle multiplied rapidly in the Pacific Northwest, particularly in western Oregon. By the close of the 1850s, this locality had an accumulation of cattle comparable, in a small way, to the subsequent accumulation of cattle in Texas. And as in later years surplus cattle were moved from Texas to markets beyond the borders of that

State, so in an earlier period surplus cattle were moved from western Oregon to markets distant from that area.

Mining activity provided the incentive for the expansion of the cattle business in the American Northwest. After 1848, some of the cattle bred in Oregon were marketed in California, but the effective outlet for Oregon cattle breeders in those early years was provided by the discovery of gold in the Pacific Northwest. The rush of gold seekers to the Fraser River in 1858 was but the beginning of an important mining advance into the Far Northwest, for in subsequent years other gold-mining areas were opened, some north and others south of the international boundary; and presently the Columbia Basin was swarming with people.<sup>2</sup> In the mining communities of British Columbia, eastern Oregon, central Idaho, and western Montana, the demand for food became prodigious. To satisfy this demand, cattle began moving from western Oregon. To the mines of British Columbia Oregon cattle traveled by way of Puget Sound or by routes through eastern Washington,<sup>3</sup> and to mines in the American Northwest other such cattle moved by different routes. But the movement of cattle from western Oregon in those years was not entirely a movement of cattle direct to market; it was in part an advance of herds into new areas, an aspect of an eastward colonizing movement. During the 1860s, cattlemen moved their herds from western Oregon to grasslands in eastern Washington, eastern Oregon, and beyond and thus opened a vast new cattle country. Nor did this movement stop with the ending of the decade; it continued into the 1870s and even later.

So rapid and so extensive had been the expansion of the cattle business that by the early 1870s cattlemen in the Pacific Northwest were facing a

<sup>2</sup> W. J. Trimble, *The Mining Advance into the Inland Empire* (Madison, 1914), is a satisfactory study of the gold-mining era of the Pacific Northwest.

<sup>3</sup> This subject is treated at some length in J. Orin Oliphant, "The Cattle Trade on Puget Sound, 1858-1890," *Agricultural History*, 7:129-149 (1933).

<sup>1</sup> C. S. Kingston, "Introduction of Cattle into the Pacific Northwest," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 14:163-185 (1923).

serious problem. The markets in the mining areas had failed or were failing,<sup>4</sup> and the markets in the growing towns of western Oregon and western Washington were proving to be inadequate to their needs. As to California, the markets of that State were far removed from the ranges of cattlemen in the Columbia Basin. Given this state of affairs, only one thing could happen: by the close of 1872 the cattle business in the Oregon Country was entering a depression.<sup>5</sup>

The depression which began in 1872 was destined to be one of great intensity and long duration. In 1870 the price of cattle in Oregon was fairly high and continued so through 1871 and the greater part of 1872. As recorded by the United States Department of Agriculture, the average price in Oregon for oxen and other cattle at the beginning of 1870 was \$22, and at the beginning of 1872 it was \$23.23. But before the end of 1872, a downward tendency had begun. From \$19.43 in January 1873, the average price for such cattle fell to \$11.80 in January 1877. A slight upturn in 1877 was followed by another decline, and by January 1880, the average price for oxen and other cattle was \$11.39. Another upward tendency began during 1880, and by December of that year the average price was \$13.72. The tide had definitely turned, and thereafter for five years the average price in Oregon for oxen and other cattle continued to rise.<sup>6</sup>

But a history of the depression in terms of the rise and the fall of average prices is not an altogether satisfactory one. For a vivid picture of the magnitude of the disaster one should turn to the newspapers of the Far Northwest of that period. On their faded pages one can trace from week to week the growing tragedy of falling prices in nearly any community of the cattle country. In the very heart of that country, at The Dalles and Walla Walla, newspapers during 1871 were listing cows with calf at \$40 to \$45 each,<sup>7</sup> but in December 1872 the *Walla Walla Union* was

listing good cows at \$25 each.<sup>8</sup> This was only the beginning. Everywhere in that vast region, as the months passed by, men who spoke for the cattle interest complained of the low price of beef. In June 1873, for example, the editor of a Boise City newspaper heard that at The Dalles beef was being sold from butchers' carts for 3 to 6 cents a pound, which prices, he observed, were "certainly cheap enough."<sup>9</sup> In March 1874, cattle were selling at Walla Walla for \$12 a head, and in the autumn of that year cattle in Umatilla County, Oregon, were reported to be "hardly worth collecting," for there calves were selling for \$4 and cows for \$8 a head.<sup>10</sup> But the end was not yet, for a year later 2-year-old and 3-year-old steers were selling at Walla Walla for only \$10 a head.<sup>11</sup> By the spring of 1876, however, the price of good steers, both in the Yakima Valley and at Walla Walla, was said to be "looking up."<sup>12</sup> Still the depression showed little indication of wearing out. In the spring of 1878, large numbers of "heavy cattle" sold in eastern Washington for not more than \$18 a head.<sup>13</sup> In the fall of 1879, at Prineville, a town situated in an important cattle community of eastern Oregon, cattle "from yearlings up" sold for \$10 to \$12 a head, "with calves thrown in."<sup>14</sup> Even as late as the spring of 1880, 4-year-old steers were selling in the Kittitas Valley of eastern Washington for no more than \$20 a head.<sup>15</sup>

Although the depression in the cattle business in the Pacific Northwest was the consequence of overexpansion in that area, it is interesting to observe that the trend of cattle prices for the entire United States during the late 1870s and the early

<sup>8</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Dec. 14, 1872; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Dec. 21, 1872.

<sup>9</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* (Boise City, Idaho), June 12, 1873. At this time cows with calf were selling at Walla Walla for \$20. *Weekly Mountaineer*, June 7, 1873.

<sup>10</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Mar. 28, 1874; *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oreg.), Oct. 30, 1874. On May 14, 1875, the *Willamette Farmer* (Salem, Oreg.) said that "selling prices" of cattle in eastern Oregon were as follows: "Yearlings \$5 to \$6, two year olds \$9 to \$11, three year olds \$15 to \$16."

<sup>11</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, May 13, 1875, quoting the *Pendleton Tribune* of May 8, 1875.

<sup>12</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, May 11, 1876.

<sup>13</sup>*Palouse Gazette* (Colfax, Wash.), May 11, 1876.

<sup>14</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 18, 1879.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, Mar. 25, 1880, quoting the *Yakima Record*.

<sup>4</sup>A. J. Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin, Last Hero of the Yakimas*, 290-291 (ed. 2, Portland, Oreg., 1944).

<sup>5</sup>*Walla Walla Union* (Walla Walla, Wash.), Dec. 14, 1872; Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin*, 291.

<sup>6</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Reports*, 1869-1886, *passim*.

<sup>7</sup>*Walla Walla Statesman* (Walla Walla, Wash.), Aug. 26, 1871, quoted in the *Weekly Mountaineer* (The Dalles, Oreg.), Sept. 2, 1871; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Feb. 18, 1871.

1880s closely resembled the trend of such prices in the Oregon Country. A resume, prepared by the statistician of the United States Department of Agriculture, illustrates this tendency.

The course of prices of beeves for six years past is suggestive. The Chicago market, the center of the trade for domestic consumption and export, can furnish a sufficient history of prices. For three years, from 1876 to 1879, there was a constant decline, amounting to 20 per cent. for choice beeves during this period. Then commenced a rise, which in three years exceeded 40 per cent., the advance moving slowly in 1879 and 1880, but much more rapidly during 1881, the increase being fully \$1 per hundred of live weight during the year. But after December, 1881, the advance was extraordinary, if not unprecedented, the range for "choice" being from \$5.85 to \$6.35 in January of 1882, and from \$8.65 to \$8.90 in June, or more than 45 per cent. advance in six months.<sup>14</sup>

The knowledge that there was a general depression in the United States during the middle and later years of the 1870s, however, gave cattlemen in the Pacific Northwest cold comfort. As they looked about them, these men saw their herds increasing and their markets slipping. Nor could it comfort them much to know that in such troubled times the newspapers of the Far Northwest were much concerned about their plight, for editors could raise the price of steers by their writing as little as cattlemen could raise it by their grumbling. Everyone knew of course the solution of the problem, namely new markets, but no one knew precisely where such markets could be found. By the middle of the 1870s, some of the cattlemen in the Oregon Country were becoming desperate. In June 1875, the editor of the *Walla Walla Union* explained the situation as follows:

Until within the last three or four years cattle have borne a good price, but lately they have gone down, until now they are very low; and now, when they appear to be worth almost nothing, nearly everybody has become disgusted with the business, and wants to sell out and turn his attention to something else. And the fact that so many want to sell, makes cattle still cheaper than they otherwise would be. But when we see the hundreds and thousands of cattle that have gone, and will go out of this country before the end of the season, it may readily be discovered that the number will be greatly decreased. But not content

with this decrease in numbers, some have conceived the idea of preventing further increase in their herds, and to this end thousands of cows and heifers are being spayed. We hear of one man in Umatilla county who has spayed 600 head of his cattle; so that in a very short time cattle will probably be high here again.<sup>15</sup>

To some extent the editor of the *Union* was writing recklessly. His assertion that the price of cattle in his community had fallen very low need not be doubted, but his assertion that "hundreds and thousands of cattle" had already gone out of that country should be accepted only with a reservation. The emphasis, it appears, should be put on the word "hundreds" rather than on the word "thousands."<sup>16</sup> As to his prediction that the practice of spaying cows would soon produce a shortage of cattle, the evidence is conclusive that cattlemen in the Pacific Northwest did not generally adopt so extreme a measure. Even if the fact of an increase in the number of cattle in the Oregon Country during the years immediately after 1875 were not known, the fact that newspapers generally in that region during those years made no mention of the practice of spaying cows would warrant the conclusion that such practice was not widely adopted. The sterilization of cows, therefore, proved to be no remedy for the depression.

Though generally they were unwilling to resort to measures of desperation, many of the cattlemen in the Oregon Country, as the shadows of depression lengthened, looked wistfully for a time upon an experiment which offered at least a possibility of opening to them markets outside their own region. That experiment consisted in canning beef for an export trade. In justification of such an undertaking there was, indeed, much that could be said. If Australia could put up beef in tin cans and ship this product to Great Britain, why, asked one Oregonian, could not the Oregon Country do likewise? To begin a beef-canning enterprise in Oregon, moreover, no new investment of capital would be required, for the salmon canneries on the lower Columbia River were idle for a part of the year. During the season when they were not being used to put up salmon, these canneries might be employed to process

<sup>14</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, quoted in the *Bellingham Bay Mail* (Whatcom, Wash.), June 19, 1875.

<sup>15</sup>See, however, the *Walla Walla Union*, May 22, June 19, 1875.

<sup>16</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Report*, 1881 and 1882, 614.



beef. Hopefully the experiment was made, but by the end of 1877 it was abundantly clear that beef canning on the Columbia River was an enterprise which gave no promise of relieving the depressed cattle industry of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>19</sup>

Thus far we have dealt with cattlemen in the Columbia Basin, men whose herds were far removed from a railroad. In southwestern Idaho and southeastern Oregon, however, cattlemen were in a somewhat different situation, for the Central Pacific Railroad gave them easy access to the best markets in California.<sup>20</sup> The completion of that railroad in 1869 had, indeed, stimulated the cattle business in a large intermountain country. Before the Central Pacific had been in operation for three years, the surveyor-general of Nevada, E. S. Davis, had reported on the westward movement of cattle by rail from Nevada as follows: "From June 30, 1870, to June 30, 1871, the Central Pacific Railroad delivered 8,874 head of beef cattle from Nevada to San Francisco; 2,500 were driven thence to the same market; making the ascertained total of 11,374 head of beef cattle during the year."<sup>21</sup>

How many of these cattle were brought to maturity on ranges in Nevada we do not know, but we do know that some of the cattle in this movement came from ranges in Idaho. Early in the summer of 1870, a San Francisco newspaper made known this fact in the following statement:

Cattle are coming to this city from almost every mountainward quarter. Some 220 head recently

arrived via railroad from Idaho. Another and a still larger band is en route from the same locality, if they have not already arrived. The C. P. R. R. Co. have built a large corral near the freight depot at Winnemucca, Humboldt county, for the more convenient keeping and loading of cattle on the cars. Heretofore cattle reaching the line of the road near that point have been driven fifty miles along the road to reach a convenient point of shipment.<sup>22</sup>

Cattle from southeastern Oregon also were included in the movement on which Davis reported. For this information we are indebted to a Reno newspaper, which, late in 1870, asserted that 227 head of beef cattle had been driven from Baker County, Oregon, to Winnemucca, in order that they might be sent by rail from that point to California. This newspaper also affirmed that this band was but a part of a herd of 2,000 head that had been bought for such purpose in Baker County.<sup>23</sup>

Because of its favorable situation, Winnemucca soon became, and for several years remained, the capital of an intermountain cattle province which comprised northwestern Nevada, southwestern Idaho, and southeastern Oregon. For the purpose of the cattle business in this province, political boundaries were of no importance. Here large-scale operators ranged their cattle in more than one State or Territory.<sup>24</sup> Here some of the greatest "cattle kings" of the Pacific slope operated—men like Colonel James A. Hardin, W. B. Todhunter, Peter French, T. M. Overfelt, Hock Mason, and Miller & Lux—to mention only some of the most important.<sup>25</sup> Here stockmen's associations tended to be interstate or interterritorial in character. Of such associations the Nevada Live Stock Association, an organization formed in 1884, is an excellent example. Among its prominent members were W. B. Todhunter, Peter French, and T. M. Overfelt, men who had their

<sup>19</sup>*Owyhee Avalanche* (Silver City, Idaho), June 25, 1870, quoting the *S. F. Scientific Press*.

<sup>20</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (Reno, Nev.), Nov. 30, 1870. "It was formerly the custom of the stockmen in southern Baker and Grant counties [Oregon] to drive their beef, annually, to Winnemucca and to Reno in Nevada, from which points they were shipped to San Francisco or were consumed in the mining camps of western Nevada." Gordon, "Report," 1083.

<sup>21</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1061, 1063.

<sup>22</sup>*Silver State* (Winnemucca, Nev.), Apr. 14, 1880; Mar. 31, 1882; Sept. 4, Dec. 14, 1885.

<sup>19</sup>J. Orin Oliphant, "A Beef-Canning Enterprise in Oregon," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 34:241-254 (1933).

<sup>20</sup>They were also within relatively easy driving distance of California markets. We are told: "The cattle driven to California in 1880 were mainly from Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and Utah, in the order named as regards importance." Clarence W. Gordon, "Report on Cattle, Sheep, and Swine, Supplementary to Enumeration of Live Stock on Farms in 1880," U. S. Census Office, 10th Census, 1880, *Report on the Productions of Agriculture*, 3:1030. In that year 5,000 head of cattle were driven from Oregon to California. *Ibid.*, 1045. Hereafter, this report is referred to as Gordon, "Report."

<sup>21</sup>U. S. General Land Office, *Report of the Commissioner*, 1871, 194. See subsequent comments by Davis on the advantages of the Central Pacific Railroad to the cattle business in Nevada. *Ibid.*, 1874, 170.

principal holdings in southeastern Oregon.<sup>26</sup> But regardless of the State or the Territory in which he had his home, every cattleman in this province knew the importance of Winnemucca to his business. From this place he hauled supplies to his ranch or ranches, and to this place he drove most of his cattle to be marketed. From Winnemucca for many years thousands of cattle were sent annually by rail to California, the number in some years exceeding 30,000 head of beef cattle.<sup>27</sup> How many of these cattle came from ranges in southeastern Oregon or southwestern Idaho no one can now say precisely, but we learn from the issues of the daily *Silver State*, a newspaper published in Winnemucca, that the number that came from southeastern Oregon to Winnemucca each year was large.<sup>28</sup>

The cattlemen in southeastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho, though they were in the Oregon Country, operated in a distinctive province, an area apart from that of the cattlemen who

<sup>26</sup>The Nevada Live Stock Association was formed at Winnemucca on Feb. 11-12, 1884. According to its secretary's report in 1885, the members of this association came from Idaho, Oregon, Utah, California, and Nevada. *Silver State*, Feb. 12, Feb. 13, 1884; Mar. 4, 1885.

<sup>27</sup>*Silver State*, Sept. 13, 1882. A statement showing the size of the annual shipments of beeves from Winnemucca for 1880-1884, inclusive, was prepared by G. W. Merrill for Joseph Nimmo, Jr. The figures, furnished by J. A. McBride, agent in Winnemucca for the Central Pacific Railroad, are as follows: 1880, 21,302 head; 1881, 29,382 head plus 1,600 dressed beeves plus about 2,300 calves; 1882, 20,975 head plus 1,200 dressed beeves; 1883, 18,744 head; 1884, 21,282 head. Joseph Nimmo, Jr., "The Range and Ranch Cattle Traffic in the Western States and Territories," 48 Congress, 2 Session, 1884-85, *House Executive Document* 267, p. 147-149 (Serial 2304). See also Henry T. Williams, ed., *The Pacific Tourist* . . . , 191 (New York, 1876).

<sup>28</sup>This statement is based upon the results of the author's examination of the *Silver State* for 1875 to 1889 in the Nevada State Library, Carson, Nevada. This journal is a principal source for the history of the cattle business in the Winnemucca province. For this purpose it has a significance comparable to that of certain pioneer newspapers of the Columbia Basin for the study of the mining advance into the Pacific Northwest.

In 1880, according to Gordon, "Report," 1070, 12,000 head of beef cattle from southern Oregon and southern Idaho were sent to California by rail from Nevada.

operated in the Columbia Basin. Of the history of the cattle business in the Winnemucca province much less is known than of the history of the cattle business in the Columbia Basin, but the general outline is clear. In the former area the cattle business was conducted on a larger scale than in the latter, and in the Winnemucca province cattlemen had easy access by railroad to markets in California long years before cattlemen in the Columbia Basin had railroad connections with markets outside their own area. That the cattlemen in the Winnemucca province were unaffected by the depression of the 1870s we have no reason to believe, but that they suffered less from that depression than the cattlemen in the Columbia Basin we may tentatively accept as a fact.

Although they were not much benefited by the Central Pacific Railroad, cattlemen in northeastern Oregon, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington were not completely isolated from the Winnemucca province. In the early 1870s buyers from Nevada were penetrating the Oregon Country as far as the Walla Walla Valley in quest of stocking and breeding cattle and were taking therefrom a considerable number of cattle;<sup>29</sup> and throughout the greater part of the decade it is evident that Nevada buyers and Oregon cattlemen were driving through southeastern Oregon into Nevada some of the cattle that had been bred on ranges in Wasco County and other parts of Oregon.<sup>30</sup> But, in the main, cattlemen in the Columbia Basin were heavily dependent upon markets in western Oregon

<sup>29</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, May 17, June 28, 1873; letter from C. H. Colton, Weston, Ore., June 26, 1873, in the *Willamette Farmer*, July 5, 1873; *Weekly Mountaineer*, May 24, July 12, 1873; *Walla Walla Union*, May 30, 1874; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Apr. 3, 1875; *Walla Walla Union*, Apr. 24, 1875, quoting the *Pendleton Tribune*, Apr. 17; *Walla Walla Union*, June 26, 1875; *Willamette Farmer*, June 25, 1875. Oregon cattle, of course, had entered Nevada much earlier than 1873. Not later than 1865, they had been sent to the Comstock mines. Gordon, "Report," 1059. In the autumn of 1872, a large herd of cattle that had been driven from Eugene City, Ore., was being fattened in Nevada. *Nevada State Journal*, Nov. 23, 1872.

<sup>30</sup>*Weekly Mountaineer*, July 26, 1873; correspondence from Prineville, Ore., Mar. 30, 1875, in the *Oregon State Journal* (Eugene City, Ore.), Apr. 10, 1875. As late as 1877, Nevada buyers were "hunting" cattle in Jackson County, southwestern Oregon. *Oregon State Journal*, July 28, 1877. See also the *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 26, 1878; and the unsigned article, "The Wasco Range," *ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1882.

and western Washington until the later 1870s. And these markets, as we have seen, were grossly inadequate to their needs.

Relief at last began to come to these hard-pressed cattlemen, not from sterilizing their cattle, not from the canning of beef on the Columbia River, and not from growing access to markets in California, but from increasing contacts with markets that were opening to them in States and Territories east of the Rocky Mountains. The growing demand for cattle east of the Rockies did, in fact, benefit cattlemen generally in the country to the west. Just as in time it liberated the cattlemen of the Columbia Basin from their heavy dependence upon markets in the Far Northwest, so also in time it freed the cattlemen in the Winnemucca province from a like dependence upon California markets. Before the end of the 1870s, cattle were moving east by rail from points in Nevada, and by the middle of the 1880s, if not earlier, California buyers were competing sharply with eastern buyers for Oregon and Nevada cattle.<sup>31</sup>

In the summer of 1875 cattle dealers were buying hundreds of cattle in the Walla Walla Valley and in northeastern Oregon. Several of these dealers were from Nevada, but in May 1875 the *Walla Walla Union* reported that one man was "buying up all the thoroughbred cattle that he can get, with a view to taking them to Wyoming Territory."<sup>32</sup> Six weeks later the editor of the *Union* in an exultant mood wrote as follows:

On Wednesday a band of some hundreds of cattle that have been purchased in this country started for Wyoming Territory. The greater portion of them were common cattle or mixed bloods, but there were

also some [of] the finest blooded animals in the valley. This thing of buying thoroughbred stock here to drive so far east, shows that Walla Walla is the cheapest place in which to purchase any kind of cattle. . . .<sup>33</sup>

The year 1875 thus marked a slight beginning of a movement of cattle eastward from the Far Northwest. How many were so moved in that year it is impossible to determine, but there is reason to believe that the band mentioned above was not the only one which left the Oregon Country for Wyoming in 1875. A special report for the census of 1880 on the livestock industry in the Far West discloses that the practice of driving cattle from southeastern Oregon to Wyoming and Colorado began not later than 1875.<sup>34</sup> As to the number so driven in that year the report gives no information whatsoever.

For the year 1876, however, there is evidence of an increase of buying by eastern cattle dealers in the cattle country of the Far Northwest.<sup>35</sup> Early in that year editors in the Columbia Basin were predicting that there would be "heavy" buying by such dealers during the approaching spring and summer,<sup>36</sup> and some of them showed keen interest in the announcement that two buyers, one from Omaha and the other from Cheyenne, were in the Pacific Northwest to "purchase about 10,000 head of our cattle for the East and the rapidly filling country in and around the Black

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, July 3, 1875.

<sup>32</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1083; *Walla Walla Union*, May 22, June 19, 1875. See also note 37 below.

<sup>33</sup>In the early summer of 1876, many buyers were reported to be in the Ochoco Valley and in Umatilla County. *Morning Oregonian*, May 1, May 23, 1876. "The demand for cattle is already being felt here, and those having them to sell are feeling better over the prospect of making sales. There are already buyers in the field, and we hear of one party who expects to gather up in the neighborhood of three thousand head. This band, we are informed, is intended to be driven out to the neighborhood of Laramie and there wintered, and in another year sent forward by rail to Eastern markets. There are also other parties who are buying, and we hear that there will be still more in a short time. . . ." *Walla Walla Union*, Feb. 12, 1876.

<sup>34</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Jan. 29, Feb. 12, 1876; *Weekly Mountaineer*, Feb. 19, 1876. Said the *Walla Walla Union* of Feb. 26, 1876: "The prices now paid by cattle buyers are better than we have had for a year or two past. They now give \$20 per head for four-year-old steers that could have been bought last Fall for \$15 or \$16. . . ."

<sup>31</sup>On Jan. 21, 1882, the *Idaho Weekly Statesman* (Boise City, Idaho) said that eastern dealers and California buyers were "competing actively" at points on the Central Pacific Railroad. In the summer of 1882, large purchases of cattle for the California market were being made in the Prineville area. *Morning Oregonian*, June 22, 1882. But as late as June 20, 1885, the *Silver State* asserted that Nevada stock raisers "were at the mercy of the San Francisco butchers." On Sept. 4, 1885, however, the *Silver State* declared that the sale of so many cattle to eastern dealers had caused an upward tendency in the price of fat beeves in California.

<sup>32</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, May 22, 1875. "The kind most usually sought is yearlings, and they pay about \$5 per head." *Ibid.*

Hills.<sup>37</sup> In 1876 the firm of Lang & Ryan of Kansas City made a purchase of cattle—perhaps its second—in the Columbia Basin.<sup>38</sup> In that year also several cattlemen of the Columbia Basin began the practice of driving their own cattle to shipping points on the Central Pacific or the Union Pacific railroads.<sup>39</sup> The number of cattle driven eastward from the Oregon Country in that year is not known. On September 2, 1876, in a speech at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Elwood Evans asserted that already that year more than 10,000 had been driven to points east of the Rockies, “principally into Wyoming.”<sup>40</sup> On the disposal of the cattle moved eastward in that year, information is also lacking. However, in the autumn of that year the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* mentioned the arrival in Wyoming of two droves of Oregon cattle. The drove from The Dalles entrained at Cheyenne; the one from southeastern Oregon moved farther eastward and entrained at Ogallala, Nebraska.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the number so moved may have been, observers of the drives in that and subsequent years were persuaded that the effective beginning of the

eastward movement of cattle from the Pacific Northwest dated from 1876.<sup>42</sup>

If the information published in the local newspapers may be trusted, the principal buyer of cattle in northeastern Oregon, eastern Washington, and northern Idaho during 1877 was the firm of Lang & Ryan. The agents of this firm also bought several hundred head of horses in the region,<sup>43</sup> and for all their purchases they paid cash, a fact which gave great satisfaction to the editor of the *Walla Walla Statesman*.<sup>44</sup> In May of that year, Lang & Ryan had a drove of cattle en route through southern Idaho for a destination east of the Rockies. This drove, which, according to the editor of the *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, consisted of 3,300 head of beef cattle—“steers ranging from two to five years old”—was thought by that editor to be headed for Nebraska, where part of the cattle would be sold and the remainder would be stall-fed for the Chicago market or other markets in the Middle West.<sup>45</sup> By the first of November, G. W. Lang had returned to the Pacific Northwest to buy more cattle. Perhaps it was from him that the editor of the *Walla Walla Union* learned that the cattle which Lang & Ryan had driven across the Rockies earlier in that year were being “corn fed in western Missouri.”<sup>46</sup>

The herd which Lang & Ryan had collected and put upon the Snake River trail did not fully measure the movement of cattle eastward from the Oregon Country in 1877. The evidence available warrants the belief that the movement in that year was larger than the movement in 1876. Certain it is that during 1877 more than one editor in the Far Northwestern cattle country was

<sup>37</sup>*Weekly Mountaineer*, Apr. 1, 1876, quoting the *Morning Oregonian*; *Dayton News* (Dayton, Wash.), Apr. 1, 1876.

<sup>38</sup>*Weekly Mountaineer*, May 6, 1876. This is the first mention of the firm of Lang & Ryan that I have encountered. The *Walla Walla Union* of Jan. 19, 1878, however, asserted: “Three years ago Mr. Lang visited the city on a prospecting tour. He was so well pleased with the outlook that he purchased quite a band of cattle.”

<sup>39</sup>*Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 23, 1877. This practice continued as long as the eastward drives were made. In 1880 the census investigator, Gordon, in his “Report,” 1082, wrote: “Many owners have for several years made annual drives of their own cattle to the markets farther east.”

<sup>40</sup>Elwood Evans, *Washington Territory* . . . , 49 (Olympia, Wash., 1877). On Dec. 1, 1876 the *Willamette Farmer* spoke ambiguously as follows: “During the last year not less than 36,000 head of beef cattle have been driven from Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington down towards the Pacific railroad.” Some of these cattle were to be sent to California, and some of them eastward. See also the *Walla Walla Union*, Nov. 25, 1876, and the *Morning Oregonian*, Nov. 20, 1876.

<sup>41</sup>Cited by Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*, 50, note 59 (Minneapolis, 1929).

<sup>42</sup>Frank T. Gilbert, *Historic Sketches of Walla Walla, Whitman, Columbia and Garfield Counties, Washington Territory, and Umatilla County, Oregon*, 294 (Portland, Oreg., 1882). See also the unsigned article, “The Wasco Range,” in the *Morning Oregonian*, Feb. 21, 1882.

<sup>43</sup>*Lewiston Teller* (Lewiston, Idaho), Feb. 3, Apr. 7, 1877.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in the *Lewiston Teller*, May 12, 1877; *Morning Oregonian*, May 8, 1877.

<sup>45</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, May 31, 1877. See also the *Weekly Mountaineer*, June 9, 1877; and the *Cheyenne Weekly Leader* (Cheyenne, Wyo.), Sept. 20, 1877.

<sup>46</sup>*Tacoma Herald* (Tacoma, Wash.), Nov. 10, 1877; *Walla Walla Union*, Nov. 2, 1877, quoted in the *Weekly Mountaineer*, Nov. 10, 1877.



favorably impressed by the opportunities that the new markets were opening to the cattlemen of the Oregon Country. A Boise City editor approached the subject in a scolding mood.

It is truly astonishing that the stock-raisers of Idaho, who have at command unlimited and unsurpassed ranges for the production of the best quality of beef, do not turn their attention to this branch of business and help supply the markets. Every season men of means visit this Territory in search of cattle to drive to the railroad to be turned into beef, but who invariably are compelled to go to the west of us to find them. The price of beef is steadily increasing, and the supply never surpasses the demand. Only a few days since a band of two or three thousand head of cattle passed through here which came from Eastern Oregon and Walla Walla, and which would have been purchased in Idaho could they have been procured. And such is the case every year. Why do not our stock-raisers devise some way to keep this money here in place of allowing the country below us to gather it up?<sup>47</sup>

In a less petulant mood the editor of the *Willamette Farmer* turned his attention to the new markets for cattle bred in the Pacific Northwest. From W. S. Newbury, of Portland, who had "just returned from an extensive business excursion through the Upper Columbia farming country," this editor, in May 1877, gathered information for a story in which he briefly described the new trade and urged cattlemen to begin improving their stock.

For one thing a regular trade is established between Kansas ranchers and stock men and the cattle men of Eastern Oregon, and already this Spring several parties of cattle buyers have gone through the Upper Country from the Dalles to Palouse, purchasing beef cattle to drive East. One firm had purchased 2700 head and was still buying, and others were in the field making large purchases.

These cattle are started Eastward by way of Boise and Snake river, through Utah, and are driven all the way to Kansas by easy stages, reaching there, some of them, early in the Fall. Later in the season those that are in good order are shipped East by rail, and the rest wintered in Kansas ready for shipment the next Spring, as soon as they are in good condition. Some of these buyers have purchased stock in Oregon for three years past, and it is becoming an old settled business, one that will grow and increase and that calls for the improvement of stock to make it as pro-

fitable as it should be to the ranchmen of Oregon and Washington. . . .<sup>48</sup>

It is apparent that a feeling of optimism was laying hold of the cattle interest in the Pacific Northwest; men concerned about the cattle business in that region were looking forward hopefully to better times. But no editor, so far as the present writer is aware, made an estimate of the total number of cattle moved eastward from the Pacific Northwest in 1877.

Certain it is that during 1878 cattle were driven from the Columbia Basin to markets east of the Rockies in even greater numbers than during 1877. Again, in 1878, if the newspaper accounts may be trusted, the firm of Lang & Ryan bought more cattle in that area than any other purchaser. From the autumn of 1877 to the spring of 1878, G. W. Lang was buying cattle, and the herd which he finally assembled for the drive numbered at least 16,000 head.<sup>49</sup> He had bought cattle in the Yakima Valley, the Big Bend country of the Columbia River, the Palouse country, the Walla Walla Valley, and northeastern Oregon.<sup>50</sup> So large a drive as he purposed making that year had never before been seen in the Columbia Basin, and consequently editors of newspapers in all the communities from which he had taken cattle manifested a keen interest in the movement of this herd. But there were other buyers in the Columbia Basin in 1878—how many it would be impossible now to determine. Of several of them, however, specific mention was made. Many persons who had no cattle to sell became familiar with the names of Edwards & Edenharter, David Harer & Son, Spratly & Everhardy, Haley & Company, Rand & Company, Insley & Company, and Hubbs & Gregory.<sup>51</sup> How many head of cattle these men and others whose names did not appear in print took out of

<sup>48</sup>*Willamette Farmer*, May 11, 1877.

<sup>49</sup>*Idaho Weekly Statesman*, May 18, 1878.

<sup>50</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Jan. 19, 1878; *Washington Standard* (Olympia, Wash.), Jan. 12, Jan. 26, 1878; *Bellingham Bay Mail*, May 4, 1878; *Palouse Gazette*, May 11, 1878; *Walla Walla Statesman*, May 12, 1878, quoted in the *Bellingham Bay Mail*, May 25, 1878; correspondence from Yakima City, Apr. 23, 1878, in the *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 30, 1878; *Walla Walla Union*, quoted in the *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 23, 1878.

<sup>51</sup>Correspondence from Goldendale, Washington Territory, Apr. 15, 1878, in the *Tacoma Herald*, Apr. 26, 1878. See also note 50 above.

<sup>47</sup>*Semi-Weekly Idahoan* (Boise City, Idaho), June 8, 1877.

the Columbia Basin in 1878 there is no means of determining, but the number was undoubtedly large. Early in that year editors were predicting that as many as 100,000 head of cattle would be driven eastward from Washington and Oregon during 1878,<sup>52</sup> but it is somewhat doubtful whether as many as that were taken from the entire Pacific Northwest during that year. The number may have been as high as 50,000 head, but inasmuch as the present writer has no information whatever concerning sales of cattle in southeastern Oregon to eastern dealers for 1878, he readily acknowledges that, if all the facts were known, the total number removed from the Pacific Northwest in that year might well be larger.

Of the cattle that were moved eastward from the Pacific Northwest in 1879, doubtless the largest herd was one that was purchased early in that year in the Steens Mountain area of southeastern Oregon by N. R. Davis of Wyoming Territory. From Peter French and other cattle breeders Davis bought 12,000 head which he intended to drive through Idaho and Utah into Colorado.<sup>53</sup> To move so large a number it was necessary for him to form several droves and to employ a large outfit to look after them. In April, the Winnemucca *Silver State* thus described the preparations that were being made:

Yesterday A. A. Jordan arrived here, and is now preparing to drive the cattle east. He has brought two car loads of horses and several wagons here, and has already engaged twenty-five men, and will require as many more to complete the outfit. A band of 150 horses purchased in California, is being driven across the country to Stein Mountain.<sup>54</sup> The outfit will leave here in a few days and go direct to Stein Moun-

tain, where the cattle will be divided into three or four drives and started east to their destination. . . .<sup>55</sup>

Later the same newspaper declared: "Another outfit belonging to N. R. Davis left here yesterday for the Stein Mountain country to drive cattle east to Colorado. It consists of twenty-five men, four wagons, and eighty horses. . . ."<sup>56</sup>

Elsewhere in the cattle areas of the Pacific Northwest there was extensive buying of cattle for eastern markets in 1879. The firm of Lang & Ryan bought several thousand head, and the firm of Rand & Briggs bought perhaps as many more; and records of several other purchases in 1879 have been found in the newspapers of that region.<sup>57</sup> The total movement of cattle eastward in that year was undoubtedly large. In May 1879, the editor of the *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, relying upon the observation of I. W. Garrett of Boise City, who, during a trip into Grant County, Oregon, had seen "several immense herds of cattle" advancing into southern Idaho en route to eastern markets, predicted that not fewer than 100,000 head of cattle would be driven eastward that year. This editor declared:

There are several herds of these cattle, ranging all the way from 10,000 to 1,000 head now crossing or near the [Snake] river, and many others coming. . . . All these cattle are driven across Idaho at a heavy expense to the purchasers, and at a serious inconvenience and some damage to the country passed over. They crowd the ferries and crossings, get mixed up with the cattle on the range, requiring much labor and care on the part of resident stockmen to prevent their own cattle from being driven off. . . .<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup>*Silver State*, Apr. 9, 1879.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, May 16, 1879. The *Idaho Avalanche* (Silver City, Idaho), June 28, 1879, may have been referring to a part of this drive when it said: "A large band of cattle, some seven thousand in all, is now passing through Owyhee en route from Stein's Mountains to Colorado. . . ."

<sup>54</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Jan. 18, 1879, quoting the *Pendleton East Oregonian*; *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 21, Mar. 25, May 21, 1879; *Palouse Gazette*, Jan. 17, 1879; *Spokane Times* (Spokane Falls, Wash.), June 19, 1879; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, May 22, June 10, Nov. 20, 1879; *Lewiston Teller*, June 13, 1879; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, May 24, June 14, 1879; *Morning Oregonian*, May 21, 1879, quoting the *Pendleton East Oregonian*.

<sup>55</sup>*Idaho Weekly Statesman*, May 24, 1879, reprinted in the *Morning Oregonian*, May 31, 1879. This story also was reprinted in the *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, and from that journal in the *Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, June 19, 1879.

<sup>56</sup>*Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 20, 1878, quoting the *Astorian*; *Tacoma Herald*, Apr. 12, 1878. From one of these newspapers the editor of the *Cheyenne Weekly Leader* doubtless obtained information which led him to assert in his issue for Oct. 3, 1878, that "more than a hundred thousand head of cattle will be driven into Utah and Wyoming from Oregon before the season closes."

<sup>57</sup>*Silver State*, Apr. 9, 1879; *Morning Oregonian*, May 2, 1879.

<sup>58</sup>Although it was once widely used, the name "Stein Mountain" is incorrect and has been displaced by "Steens Mountain." This mountain was named in honor of Major Enoch Steen, U. S. Army. Lewis A. McArthur, *Oregon Geographic Names*, 490 (ed. 2, Portland, Oreg., 1944).

The estimate of this editor may not have been far wrong. In October of that year the surveyor-general of Idaho calculated that 40,000 head of cattle had been sold in Idaho that season for eastern markets,<sup>59</sup> and in January 1881, a correspondent of the *Chicago Times*, writing from the Kittitas Valley in Washington Territory, asserted that the firm of Lang & Ryan had driven eastward, "by way of Boise City and Cheyenne," 20,000 head of cattle in 1879.<sup>60</sup> Assuming that the last two estimates were approximately correct, it would not be unreasonable to suppose that at least 100,000 head of cattle were driven eastward from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho during 1879.

In 1879 some of the Idaho cattlemen, doubtless profiting by the experience of Oregon and Washington cattlemen, drove their own cattle to points of entrainment on the Union Pacific Railroad. But the editor of the *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* was nettled to think that all had not done so. Taking his cue from a statement made to him by Solomon Jeffries of Weiser City, who had just returned from driving 800 head of beef cattle to Cheyenne,<sup>61</sup> this editor on October 23, 1879, read the following lecture to the cattlemen of Idaho on the economics of the cattle business.

During the present summer several large herds of cattle have been sold in this section of Idaho to Eastern dealers and driven to Cheyenne and other points on the railroad. Those who sold got what they considered a fair price at home, but they might have realized much more by driving their own cattle to market. There is never any trouble or delay in disposing of good beef cattle either at the railroad or in the markets of Omaha and Chicago. There is nothing whatever to prevent our cattle raisers from marketing their own stock and pocketing all that can be made in the business.

The cattle trade from this region is fast attaining immense proportions. Among the causes of this are the constantly growing demand for beef in the Eastern markets, and the fact that the beef raised here is of a superior quality to that raised in Texas or anywhere east of the Rocky Mountains.

Another mistake which stock raisers make in this country is in keeping cattle of marketable age over

winter. The winters here, while they are generally mild and favorable to the keeping of large herds on range without much care, are uncertain enough to make it a matter of prudence to dispose of the surplus and marketable stock before the winter sets in. If cattle raisers would adopt the plan of driving and shipping their own stock and disposing each season of all the cattle ready for market they would not only save all that the outside dealer makes by buying and driving, but they would also save all that is liable to be lost by keeping too many cattle over winter.

The movement of cattle eastward from the Oregon Country reached its culmination in 1880. So large was the eastward drive in that year that observers on both sides of the Rockies were excited about it.<sup>62</sup> No one knows precisely how large that drive was, and contemporaneous estimates of the number of cattle so driven varied. Perhaps the most trustworthy of such estimates is the one based upon an investigation made for the census of 1880. According to that estimate, Wyoming got 62,000 head from Washington Territory, 58,300 from Oregon, and 50,000 from Idaho Territory.<sup>63</sup> Yet there are other estimates, none of which should be ignored, that put the number so driven still higher. In view of this fact an examination and comparison of four other estimates, two of them made west of the Rockies and two of them east of the Rockies, is pertinent.

Early in the spring of 1881 a newspaper in the heart of the southeastern Oregon cattle country offered some evidence to support its belief that more than 200,000 head of cattle had moved eastward from the Pacific Northwest in 1880.

The magnitude of the cattle trade of Eastern Oregon, Washington and Idaho is but dimly understood by the general public. All have an idea that considerable numbers are driven East each season, but the immense aggregate is scarcely dreamed of. On the Sweetwater in Wyoming at one station a record is kept of all stock driven over the route during the past year, and this record shows that the surprisingly large number of 170,000 head had passed through to Rock Creek Station. These came from Oregon, Washington and Idaho, but the majority from the Eastern portion of our state. There are other routes which will increase this number probably 70,000. We can realize from

<sup>59</sup>46 Congress, 2 Session, 1879-80, *House Executive Documents*, 10:438 (Serial 1911).

<sup>60</sup>Quoted in the *North-West Tribune* (Cheney, Wash.), June 17, 1881.

<sup>61</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Oct. 21, 1879. Jeffries reported that the "demand for cattle at Cheyenne and at the great cattle markets of Omaha and Chicago is immense."

<sup>62</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, June 9, June 13, 1880; *Weekly Drivers' Journal* (Chicago), June 10, 1880, quoting the *Kansas City Price Current*.

<sup>63</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1018. On page 1093 of this work, it is asserted that 72,000 head of cattle were driven from Washington Territory to Wyoming in 1880.



this the importance of the cattle trade to this Eastern section of the country, and it is constantly on the increase. Next year there will be more driven to points on the Union Pacific, if the severity of the present season does not prove very fatal to stock.<sup>64</sup>

This estimate is larger than one made in Idaho during the preceding autumn. At the end of the driving season in 1880, Judge Peck of Camas Prairie, who, we are told, "kept account," informed the *Idaho Democrat* that "180,000 head of cattle, 50,200 head of sheep, and about 2,000 head of horses" had passed through that prairie in 1880 on the way to eastern markets.<sup>65</sup>

Estimates made east of the Rockies disclose like differences. In June 1880, a Chicago stock journal reprinted from a Kansas City trade journal a paragraph containing a prediction by an interested observer that the number of cattle that would be driven eastward from the Pacific Coast that year would be "unprecedented."

The Oregon cattle drive, says the Kansas City *Price Current*, promises to be a very important factor in the Western cattle market this season. Mr. J. W. Gamel arrived at Kansas City last week from a visit to the cattle country along the Union Pacific Railroad. He says the number of cattle driven in and shipped Eastward from the Pacific coast this year will be unprecedented. The drive is placed by some as high as 200,000. Col. Carter, of the firm of Coe & Carter, Omaha, has just returned, where he has contracted for 10,000 cattle and will ship them in by rail to his range in Wyoming, he having obtained a freight rate of \$6 per head. J. M. Taylor is driving 15,000, Messrs. Lang & Ryan a large number, the Gillespie boys of our city have a herd, and there are a number of others driving whose names Mr. Gamel was unable to obtain.<sup>66</sup>

More conservative than the foregoing estimate was that which the *Weekly Drivers' Journal* of January 13, 1881 reprinted from the *St. Joseph (Missouri) Gazette*. That estimate put the drive from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho into Wyoming in 1880 at "about 150,000 head, which found a ready market."

Whatever it may have been, the number of cattle moved eastward from the Pacific Northwest

in 1880 was very large.<sup>67</sup> To provide cattle for so large a movement there was extensive buying in all parts of the Far Northwestern cattle country.<sup>68</sup> In that year, as in several earlier years, the most widely advertised buyer in the Columbia Basin was the firm of Lang & Ryan, whose enormous herd of that year was drawn from ranges in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. In March 1880, the *Morning Oregonian* published the names of the cattlemen of eastern Oregon and Idaho who had made sales to Lang & Ryan, as well as the number of cattle that each of these men had sold to that firm. These sales aggregated 24,800 head.<sup>69</sup> It is certain, however, that this total does not include all the cattle that Lang & Ryan bought that year, for it omits mention of several thousand head of cattle that the firm is known to have secured in Washington Territory.<sup>70</sup> It seems likely that a subsequent estimate of "over 30,000" as the number that Lang & Ryan drove

<sup>67</sup>*Weekly Mountaineer*, Apr. 22, 1880; *Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, Sept. 30, 1880; *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 16, May 27, June 9, June 13, July 1, 1880; correspondence from Yakima City to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in the *Yakima Record* (Yakima City, Wash.), Apr. 17, 1880; *North-West Tribune*, Aug. 18, 1880. In his report to the Secretary of the Interior, dated Nov. 20, 1880, Governor John W. Hoyt of Wyoming Territory wrote as follows: "It is also worthy of note that our cattle are quite rapidly improving in quality. There are fewer importations of young stock than formerly from Texas, and a correspondingly large number from the West, where considerable attention is now given to the improvement of the native stock by the infusion of better blood." 46 Congress, 3 Session, *House Executive Documents*, 10:526 (Serial 1960).

<sup>68</sup>*Yakima Record*, Apr. 24, 1880, quoting the Baker City *Democrat*; *Weekly Mountaineer*, May 27, 1880; *Lewiston Teller*, June 11, June 18, June 25, 1880; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, June 5, 1880. In 1880, "the President of the Stock Growers Association of Iowa, resident at Council Bluffs, was in Prineville, Oregon, with three other stock buyers for Eastern and for California markets. He reported that 50,000 head would be bought, during 1880, for the Chicago markets. They were to be driven to Wyoming and Nebraska; to be wintered and fed and assorted for their several markets the two following years." G. H. Atkinson, "The Future Model Farm of Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington," *West Shore* (Portland, Oreg.), March 1882, p. 45.

<sup>69</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, Mar. 9, 1880.

<sup>70</sup>*Yakima Record*, Mar. 13, July 31, 1880.

<sup>64</sup>Baker County *Reveille*, quoted by the *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Jan. 22, 1881; also quoted in the *Willamette Farmer*, Mar. 11, 1881.

<sup>65</sup>*Willamette Farmer*, Oct. 29, 1880.

<sup>66</sup>*Weekly Drivers' Journal*, June 10, 1880.



eastward from the Oregon Country in 1880 was not an exaggeration.<sup>71</sup>

The driving of so large a herd was a task requiring a considerable force of men and horses, and the preparations for this undertaking aroused interest in the Middle West as well as in the Pacific Northwest. In June 1880, the *Weekly Drivers' Journal* of Chicago copied from the *Willamette Farmer* a description of these preparations,<sup>72</sup> without making known the fact that the latter publication had borrowed this description from the *Morning Oregonian*.

To drive these [cattle of Lang & Ryan] to the Yellowstone country, where they will winter, will require 800 head of horses and the services of 120 men. Most of these 'cow boys' are Kansas men, who have been in the employ of this concern for the past six years. Forty wagons accompany the drive, and about 160 stand of loaded rifles will always be on hand, good for about 3000 shots at any band of hostile Indians that may attack them. The drive will be cut up into three squads or bands of cattle, the first lot having two days start of the third. This brings them in easy range of the rear from the front. In April they will begin to gather up for the start, and by the 25th of that month the greatest body of cattle ever banded together will be slowly marching eastward. Up to the 20th of June the drive will be about nine miles per day, but as the heat of summer comes along they will decrease it to about five. Therefore a steer travels no more on a drive of this kind than he would upon the range, and is sure to be in good order when he reaches the Yellowstone, as there is abundance of bunch grass as soon as the Grande Ronde river is passed.<sup>73</sup>

Owing in part at least to the severe winter of 1880-81, a winter which decimated herds throughout the Pacific Northwest,<sup>74</sup> the movement of cattle eastward from the Oregon Country in 1881 appears to have been relatively light. According to an estimate by the editor of the *Morning Oregonian*, the losses of cattle during the winter were 83 percent in Yakima Valley, 78 in Klickitat County, 62 in Wasco County, and 55 in Umatilla

and Walla Walla counties.<sup>75</sup> These estimates may be rather extravagant, but there is no denying that everywhere in the Pacific Northwest the losses of cattle during that winter were very heavy.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, sales in eastern Washington and eastern Oregon to eastern buyers were reported for 1881,<sup>77</sup> and an official report asserts that there was a large drive of cattle from Washington and Oregon to northern ranges.<sup>78</sup> But the evidence now available does not warrant any attempt to estimate the size of this eastward drive. It is significant, however, that in November 1881, the governor of Wyoming Territory reported to the Secretary of the Interior a "falling off in the export supply [of cattle] of the Pacific States and Territories."<sup>79</sup>

The number of cattle in the eastward drive from the Pacific Northwest undoubtedly was considerably larger in 1882 than it had been in 1881. Early in 1882 eastern buyers were seeking cattle in various parts of the region, and, by paying higher prices, they succeeded in collecting a considerable number for the eastward drive.<sup>80</sup> Several fairly large sales were reported at relatively high prices.<sup>81</sup> In May, the *Lewiston Teller* estimated that about 10,000 cattle and about 1,500 horses would be driven from two counties of northern Idaho and two counties of eastern Washington "by four or five purchasing companies."<sup>82</sup> Estimates of the number of cattle purchased in eastern Oregon in 1882 for eastern

<sup>71</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, Mar. 7, 1883.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, Jan. 12, Apr. 14, May 3, May 21, 1881.

<sup>73</sup>*Idaho Avalanche*, May 28, 1881; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 5, Mar. 19, 1881; *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 20, June 8, Sept. 2, 1881. "Mr. Lang and son" arrived in Wasco County about the first of the year to collect a herd to drive eastward. *Morning Oregonian*, Jan. 5, 1881.

<sup>74</sup>U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry, *Annual Report*, 1885, 296.

<sup>75</sup>47 Congress, 1 Session, 1881-82, *House Executive Documents*, 10:1059 (Serial 2018).

<sup>76</sup>*Clarke County Register* (Vancouver, Wash.), Mar. 16, 1882, quoting the *Walla Walla Union*; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 18, Mar. 25, 1882; *Weekly Drivers' Journal*, Apr. 20, 1882, quoting the *Lewiston Teller*; *Morning Oregonian*, June 9, 1882.

<sup>77</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, June 6, 1882; *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 1, May 6, May 8, May 25, June 10, 1882.

<sup>78</sup>Quoted in the *Washington Democrat* (Colfax, Wash.), May 5, 1882.

<sup>71</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, Feb. 3, 1882; correspondence from "Kittitas Valley, W. T., Jan. 25," in the *Chicago Times*, quoted in the *North-West Tribune*, June 17, 1881.

<sup>72</sup>*Weekly Drivers' Journal*, June 10, 1880.

<sup>73</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, Mar. 9, 1880.

<sup>74</sup>J. Orin Oliphant, "Winter Losses of Cattle in the Oregon Country," *Washington Historical Quarterly*, 23:13-14 (1932).

markets varied, but none of them was less than 35,000 head.<sup>83</sup> By the end of June 1882, the *Morning Oregonian* believed that 100,000 head of cattle had already moved eastward past Boise City, and that newspaper supposed that these cattle had been obtained in about equal numbers from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.<sup>84</sup> But the eastward movement of livestock in that year was not just a movement of cattle, for eastern buyers also purchased sheep and horses in the Pacific Northwest to drive to markets east of the Rockies.<sup>85</sup> This change in the composition of the drives is well illustrated by the experience of the firm of Lang & Ryan. Not later than May 1882, Matt Ryan wrote from Leavenworth, Kansas, to the *Kansas City Price Current* as follows:

A recent letter from my boys on the northwest round-up says that the Oregon cattle drive promises to be a light one this season. Herds for sale in that region are getting both scarce and high. My boys will drive 18,000 cattle, 10,000 sheep and have some 1,500 horses. They say they could get no more cattle so bought horses. Two of them went over the Blue Mountains to British Columbia to try and get cattle, but could find none. . . .<sup>86</sup>

It appears, however, that Ryan's "boys" did not reach their goal for cattle but exceeded it for sheep. In June 1882 the editor of the *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman* reported the presence in Boise City of "Mr. Ryan, of the Kansas City stock firm of Lang & Ryan," who, the editor declared, was in charge of a drive of 12,000 cattle and 20,000 to 30,000 sheep.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup>*Pataha City Spirit* (Pataha City, Wash.), Apr. 1, 1882, quoting the *East Oregonian*. The *Grant County News* estimated that 55,000 head of cattle had been sent eastward from eastern Oregon during 1882. *West Shore*, June 1883, p. 139 (a clipping in the Villard Papers, Harvard College Library).

<sup>84</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, June 30, 1882; reprinted in the *Weekly Drivers' Journal*, July 20, 1882.

<sup>85</sup>*West Shore*, June 1883, p. 139. See also the *Morning Oregonian*, June 9, 1882. Some owners of horses or of sheep drove their own livestock eastward in 1882. *Washington Democrat*, May 31, 1882. There is need of a detailed study of the eastward movement of horses and of sheep from the Pacific Northwest.

<sup>86</sup>*Weekly Drivers' Journal*, May 25, 1882.

<sup>87</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, June 29, 1882. Earlier, however, the *Walla Walla Union*, Jan. 28, 1882, and the *West Shore*, February 1882, p. 37, had stated that Lang & Ryan had bought in eastern Oregon 13,000 head of cattle to drive east that year. An

Whatever its size may have been, the eastward drive in 1882 was the last important one to be made from the Oregon Country.<sup>88</sup> By the end of that year the great surplus of cattle had been removed from the region; everywhere in the Pacific Northwest cattle were becoming relatively scarce. As the editor of the *Morning Oregonian* observed in May 1883:

Cattle-buyers, who heretofore have operated largely in Oregon, find it impossible to gather herds this spring. Almost all the salable stock has been sold or contracted to the home market, while productive cows and heifers are not for sale at any reasonable price. Our cattle growers find that they have heretofore been in too great haste to sell and from this time on will follow a different policy. . . .

The only parts of this state where great droves of cattle still feed on the range is the region about Prineville, in the central part of the state, and in Lake county. The famous ranges of eastern Oregon are being fast settled and cut up into farms, and Wasco has become almost solely a farming region. . . .<sup>89</sup>

During the years of the large cattle drives from the Oregon Country into Wyoming and Colorado, there were other drives of cattle and other livestock from the Far Northwest into Montana.<sup>90</sup> The movement to Montana, in fact, was a part of the general eastward movement. Two roads led from the cattle grounds of the Far Northwest to the ranges of Montana Territory. The northernmost of these was the Mullan Road, a military road constructed by an army engineer, Lieutenant (later Captain) John Mullan, for the purpose of connecting Fort Benton on the Missouri River with Wallula on the Columbia River. The southernmost road ran through southern Idaho

interesting side light on Lang & Ryan's drive of 1882 was recorded as follows: "Lang & Ryan, the well-known drovers, have secured the services of a band of negro minstrels, genuine darkies, to aid in driving their cattle across the plains. The minstrels are to sing to the cattle at night to keep them quiet." *Clarke County Register*, Mar. 30, 1882.

<sup>88</sup>In subsequent years, there was, of course, some driving of cattle within the Pacific Northwest and from that region. See, for example, the *Weekly Drivers' Journal*, July 9, 1885 quoting the *Shoshone Journal* (Idaho), and the *Walla Walla Union*, Mar. 13, 1886, telling of a drive from eastern Washington to "the British possessions, north of Montana."

<sup>89</sup>*Morning Oregonian*, May 29, 1883.

<sup>90</sup>This subject is treated rather fully in J. Orin Oliphant, "The Cattle Trade from the Far Northwest to Montana," *Agricultural History* 6:69-83 (1932).

by way of Boise City. Both these roads were used by drovers, but the Mullan Road lost its significance for the cattle trade after the Northern Pacific Railroad was completed in 1883.<sup>91</sup>

Over these two roads, between 1875 and 1883, large numbers of cattle were driven from the Far Northwest. During the later 1870s, the movement appears to have been rather small; but between 1880 and 1883 the annual drives ran into the thousands. According to a Federal census report the number of cattle driven into Montana from Oregon and Washington in 1880 exceeded 26,000 head.<sup>92</sup> A well-informed contemporary writer asserted that 60,000 cattle and 100,000 sheep were driven from Oregon and Washington to the Montana ranges in 1881.<sup>93</sup> During the next two years, such drives, though not slight, appear to have been smaller. The two years 1880 and 1881, therefore, saw the peak, but not the end, of cattle driving from the Far Northwest to Montana ranges.

By the autumn of 1883, a change was impending in the cattle trade from the Pacific Northwest to eastern markets. This change was clearly revealed two years later by the annual report of the vice president and general manager of the Northern Pacific Railroad which reads:

In 1883-4, we forwarded from eastern terminals 77,320 head and from Washington and Oregon 3,100 head. During the past fiscal year the offer of special rates has developed an important movement from our Western Divisions. There have been shipped from stations west of the Rocky Mountains 34,740 head of cattle, 3,360 horses, and 24,400 sheep. The shipments westward from eastern points aggregated 34,120 head of cattle.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup>For a recent study, see Oscar Osburn Winther, "Early Commercial Importance of the Mullan Road," *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 46:22-35 (1945). A letter from Captain John Mullan, asserting that it would be more advantageous to cattlemen of eastern Oregon and of eastern Washington to drive their cattle by the Mullan Road to Miles City, Mont., rather than to drive them by the southern route to Cheyenne, Wyo., is quoted from the *Walla Walla Union* in the *Spokane Times*, Feb. 10, 1880.

<sup>92</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1026. See *ibid.*, 1093, for a considerable discrepancy in respect to the number sent from Washington to Montana.

<sup>93</sup>Robert E. Strahorn, *Montana and Yellowstone National Park* . . . , 98 (Kansas City, 1881).

<sup>94</sup>Northern Pacific Railroad, *Annual Report of the Vice-President and General Manager . . . for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30th, 1885*, p. 5 (New York, 1885).

As this report was dated June 30, 1885, it does not include late summer and autumn shipments of that year. The year 1885 probably was the peak year of such shipments, but for at least another year the movement was considerable, as the corresponding report for 1886 reveals. Says that report:

The ingoing movement of young and breeding cattle to the ranges of Montana Territory has undergone a remarkable change during the past two years. Formerly our shipments were from the East, and came from States tributary to our eastern terminals. Now they are nearly all from Oregon and Washington. Meanwhile the drives from Texas and the Indian Territory continue to increase each season. The ingoing Montana stock shipments for the year were about as follows: 28,000 head of young cattle from Washington Territory and Oregon, also 32,000 sheep from the same source, 19,500 young cattle from the East.<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately the report that the board of directors of that railroad made in September 1887 does not differentiate for the preceding year the shipments of cattle from the east into Montana from the shipments of cattle from the west into that territory. It says: "The shipments into Montana for stocking ranches during the year were, from the East and from Washington Territory 50,900 head of cattle, a few thousand more than last season; and into Montana from Washington Territory, 34,940 head of sheep."<sup>96</sup>

But by this time the movement of cattle from the Far Northwest to Montana ranges was rapidly declining. After the severe winter of 1886-87, one does not find, either in the newspapers of the Pacific Northwest or in the official literature of the Northern Pacific Railroad, mention of large movements of cattle from Oregon and Washington to Montana. This trade was petering out. It is significant that, though they both emphasize the shipments of sheep from western points to Montana and Dakota, the report of the board of directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad for 1889, as well as that for 1890, makes no mention of the shipment of western cattle to Montana. "In addition to the number we carried to market," says the report for 1890, "there were shipped from Washington and Oregon to Montana and

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 1886, p. 7-8 (New York, 1886).

<sup>96</sup>Northern Pacific Railroad, *Report of the Board of the Directors to the Stockholders at Their Annual Meeting, September 15, 1887*, p. 64 (New York, 1887).

Dakota, for grazing purposes, 101,400 head of stock sheep, an increase of 53,800 over the previous year."<sup>97</sup>

In the southeastern part of the Oregon Country the driving of cattle eastward to markets also gave way to the sending of cattle eastward by rail. As early as 1878 a shipment of beef cattle from Nevada to Chicago was made, and as early as the summer of 1879, shipments of cattle eastward from Winnemucca to feeding grounds in Nebraska or Iowa were recorded.<sup>98</sup> Here was a prospect of a significant development, a prospect which the editor of the *Silver State* was quick to perceive. "Should this business prove remunerative to the purchaser it will be of great advantage to the stock owners in this part of Nevada," this editor remarked, "as it will give them a market east and make them independent of San Francisco, to which all the beef cattle from this part of the country have hitherto been shipped."<sup>99</sup> But such independence as this editor envisaged came not in a day. Although the shipping of cattle eastward from Winnemucca,<sup>100</sup> and doubtless also from other points in Nevada, continued, California, nevertheless, remained for several years longer the principal destination of beef cattle sent by rail from Winnemucca.<sup>101</sup> The shipments eastward from that point, therefore, could not have been large. Though they were relatively small, it is almost certain that they included some of the cattle which each year were driven from southeastern Oregon to Winnemucca for marketing.

By the summer of 1885 cattle in large numbers from Oregon and Idaho ranges were being sent eastward by rail, but not from Winnemucca. The Utah and Northern Railroad and the Oregon Short Line, both of which railroads were then

in operation,<sup>102</sup> had given a new market outlet to many stockmen of the Oregon Country, and the latter line was threatening to diminish the cattle trade through Winnemucca. Such a threat the editor of the *Silver State* clearly perceived, for on August 14, 1885, he wrote as follows:

Chicago and Omaha cattle buyers have been visiting the stock ranges of Eastern Oregon and Western Idaho lately, and purchasing large numbers of beef and stock cattle. Pete French and Col. Shea are said to have sold all their beef cattle to Eastern purchasers, and we are informed that Hock Mason has disposed of 5,000 head to Eastern men, who ship them from Ontario, on the Oregon Short Line, east. A letter received here by a prominent cattle man gives the prices paid at Ontario, which are for three-year-olds and upwards, \$37 per head, and for two-year-olds and dry cows, \$25 per head. Stock men say these are better rates than can be had here at present, and will have a tendency to divert the cattle business of Southern Oregon to Chicago instead of San Francisco.

On September 4, 1885, this editor, writing again on the subject of eastward shipments of cattle from the Winnemucca province, noted:

A prominent cattle man, who knows whereof he speaks, tells the *SILVER STATE* that 13,000 head of beef cattle from northern ranges, which have heretofore found a market in San Francisco, have been sold to Chicago buyers this season for shipment East. The largest sales were made by N. H. A. Mason, Lux & Miller, Pete French, W. B. Todhunter, Staufer & Sweetser, and Col. Hardin, each and all of whom have ranges in Grant or Baker counties, in Oregon. Sales have also been made to Eastern purchasers in the eastern part of Nevada and in Utah, by Sparks & Tinnin and other well-known stockmen. These sales to Eastern buyers from sections of the country which have heretofore relied exclusively on the California market has caused an upward tendency in the price of fat beeves for Fall and Winter delivery, as it relieves the San Francisco market of a surplus.

The eastward movement of cattle by the Oregon Short Line and by the Union Pacific in 1885, however, was much larger than that indicated above. In that year there was at least one shipment to Chicago by these railroads from a point

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 1890, p. 25 (New York, 1890).

<sup>98</sup>*Silver State*, June 27, June 30, Sept. 20, Oct. 6, 1879; Gordon, "Report," 1063.

<sup>99</sup>*Silver State*, Aug. 12, 1879.

<sup>100</sup>For some account of shipments eastward from Winnemucca in 1880, see the *Silver State*, July 7-Aug. 27, 1880. During 1880, according to Gordon, "Report," 1070, Nevada sent by rail 6,168 head of cattle to Wyoming and Nebraska.

<sup>101</sup>*Silver State*, July 1, 1885. In this issue the editor asserted that Nevada cattle breeders were almost wholly dependent upon San Francisco for a market, and that, in self-defense, they should seek an outlet to the east.

<sup>102</sup>"Report of the Government Directors of the Union Pacific Railway [December 1884]," 48 Congress, 2 Session, 1884-85, *House Executive Documents*, 12:659-660 (Serial 2287); *Report to the Stockholders of the Union Pacific Railway Company for the Year 1883*, p. 12-14 (New York, 1884).



as far west as Walla Walla, a shipment which revealed the fact that cattlemen in southeastern Washington could choose between the Union Pacific and the Northern Pacific.<sup>103</sup> As to shipments of cattle from Idaho in that year, the governor of Idaho reported to the Secretary of the Interior on October 26, 1885, as follows:

The exports of live-stock from shipping-stations on the Oregon Short Line Railroad in Idaho, during the year 1885, aggregate 1,800 car-loads, or 36,000 head of horses and cattle. . . .

The cost of transportation of live beef from Central Idaho has been reduced by the Union Pacific Railway during the year, the freight rate from interior points averaging from 1 cent to 1½ cents per pound to Chicago.<sup>104</sup>

That the Oregon Short Line was undermining the position that Winnemucca had enjoyed for years as the capital of a cattle province there could no longer be any doubt. In the spring of 1886 the editor of the *Silver State* confessed the fact when he explained that the dwindling shipments of cattle from Humboldt County had been "caused by northern cattlemen shipping to Chicago over the Oregon Short Line."<sup>105</sup>

During 1886 there were numerous shipments of cattle from Oregon and Idaho eastward by the Oregon Short Line. In June a Boise City editor wrote: "Stock shipments over the O. S. L. railroad from Oregon and Idaho points are increasing constantly. The shipments between now and fall will be very heavy, and thousands of dollars will be brought back to Idaho and Oregon to be put in circulation."<sup>106</sup> On October 1 the governor of Idaho estimated that the exports of horses and cattle by the Oregon Short Line from Idaho Territory for 1886 would "probably exceed 30,000 head."<sup>107</sup>

As we have seen, the total shipment of livestock eastward from Washington by the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1886, as also in 1885, was

<sup>103</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Apr. 25, May 2, 1885. See also a letter from M. McManamon to the editor in *ibid.*, May 9, 1885.

<sup>104</sup>49 Congress, 1 Session, 1885-86, *House Executive Documents*, 12:994 (Serial 2379). On July 23, 1885, a Cheyenne newspaper, the *Democratic Leader*, said: "Large numbers of stock cattle are being shipped from West Idaho and Nevada to Wyoming."

<sup>105</sup>*Silver State*, Mar. 20, 1886.

<sup>106</sup>*Idaho Weekly Statesman*, June 26, 1886.

<sup>107</sup>49 Congress, 2 Session, 1886-87, *House Executive Documents*, 9:856 (Serial 2468).

large. By the middle 1880s, therefore, it is plain that the eastward cattle trade from the Pacific Northwest had been transformed. By 1885 the railroads had made the cattle markets of the Middle West easily accessible to the cattlemen of the Pacific Northwest. By that time the cattlemen could send their fat beeves by rail from nearly every part of the Oregon Country direct to the stockyards in Chicago or to slaughtering places in other cities of the Middle West. By that time there was less need for them to send to the corn-growing States beef cattle that were unready for market. By that time these cattlemen had virtually ceased to send young cattle to stock ranges east of the Oregon Country. Even within the Pacific Northwest the extension of railroad lines was altering the cattle trade. By the end of 1886, cattlemen in Yakima Valley could see that the time was fast approaching when they would no longer need the trail over which they had driven cattle through the Snoqualmie Pass to Puget Sound for several years. But the internal cattle trade of the Oregon Country is a subject with which this article is not directly concerned.

Like the northward movement of cattle from Texas, the eastward movement of cattle from the Oregon Country, as we have seen, was a movement of cattle toward markets. But the problem of marketing cattle at the end of a long drive from the Far Northwest was not altogether a simple one. Some of the cattle, on their arrival at a shipping point in Wyoming, were put on cars and sent direct to the Chicago market. Of this practice the *Weekly Drivers' Journal*, as early as 1876, remarked:

Four hundred cattle arrived here direct from Washington Territory, and were sold one-half of the number at \$3.90 per 100 pounds, and the other half at \$4.00, making, we are happy to say, some money for the owners. They were heavy coarse cattle, but certainly showed well as to flesh, considering the hard usage they had to undergo in making the long journey here. They were in the first place driven 600 miles from the ranges where they were brought to a point 360 miles west of Cheyenne, on the Union Pacific Railroad from which point they came by rail to Chicago. . . . These cattle are a part of 2,600 head that have been bought in Washington Territory and Oregon for this market.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>108</sup>Quoted in the *Walla Walla Union*, Sept. 16, 1876. See the *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 18, 1876; also an editorial in the *Weekly Drivers' Journal*, Feb. 23, 1882. For Chicago quotations on Oregon cattle in 1880, see *ibid.*, June 24-Oct. 7, 1880.

But such of the beef cattle as were unready for market when they arrived at shipping points on the railroad were sent to feeding grounds. From the newspapers of that time and from a report prepared for the Federal census we learn that cattle from the Pacific Northwest were fed in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas, preparatory to their being marketed.<sup>109</sup> One illustration of this practice, however, will suffice. In the summer of 1884, the Kansas City *Price Current* published the following notice:

Kansas has sent us a good many nice cattle the past two years, but never before so large a drove as last Saturday, when A. Wilson, of Kingsville, arrived at the yards with 211 well finished Oregon steers of his own feeding. They were thick, fat and barring that coarse appearance so common to Oregon cattle a very handsome lot. They were three and four-year-olds and had been fed fourteen months, in which time they were made to weigh 1,626 pounds. They were sold to Messrs. Quinlan, Montgomery & Co., at \$6.00 per cwt., and aggregated \$20,589. The biggest single sale of fat cattle ever made on our yards.<sup>110</sup>

Now and again during the years of the eastward movement, cattle from the Oregon Country entered into the export trade from the United States to Great Britain. As early as the autumn of 1877, word reached the Pacific Northwest that a herd of "400 head of large beef cattle" which had been driven from eastern Oregon to the "Overland" railroad had been shipped from New York to England "to tickle the palates of the Johnny Bulls."<sup>111</sup> Some eight years later, the arrival in England of a consignment of cattle from Wyoming brought forth from the London *Live-Stock Journal* the observation that a few of these cattle were from Oregon, "having walked through from there to Wyoming in 1882."<sup>112</sup> But such accounts of the shipment of Oregon cattle to Great Britain

were more diverting than important. During the period of this study, stockmen in the Pacific Northwest did not breed cattle for English markets. Such of their cattle as were eventually marketed in Great Britain were so marketed because they had become mixed with cattle generally in the States east of the Rocky Mountains.

Not all the cattle driven eastward from the Pacific Northwest during the late 1870s and the early 1880s were immediately disposed of in the ways mentioned above. Many of them were put upon ranges in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, or Nebraska. Here is an aspect of the Pacific Northwest cattle trade that historians of the range-cattle industry have either minimized or have overlooked.<sup>113</sup> But of the significance of this phase of the eastward movement of cattle from the Oregon Country contemporary observers had no doubt. They were keenly aware of the fact that cattle from the Far Northwest were being used in considerable numbers as stockers on ranges in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, and elsewhere. From Pacific Northwest newspapers of that period we learn that as early as 1875 Wyoming buyers were gathering cattle in the Walla Walla Valley, and that thereafter until at least 1882 Wyoming cattlemen, either in person or by agents, continued to buy cattle in various parts of the Oregon Country.<sup>114</sup> From a Cheyenne newspaper we learn of the presence of Oregon cattle in Wyoming as early as the later 1870s. In the autumn of 1877, according to this newspaper, G. A. Searight was preparing to send east "350 fine three year old Oregon steers" he was holding on North Bear Creek,<sup>115</sup> and about the

<sup>109</sup>Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*, 50, 93, 138, mentions briefly the eastward movement of Oregon cattle. At the end of a long footnote (p. 138), he acknowledges that Oregon cattle had helped to improve herds on the northern ranges. Equally slight is the attention given by Edward Everett Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 61, 83, 88 (Norman, Okla., 1930) to the eastward movement of cattle from Oregon.

<sup>110</sup>*Weekly Drovers' Journal*, Mar. 11, 1880; *Walla Walla Union*, Oct. 6, 1877, quoting an item which the *Weekly Mountaineer* had reprinted from the *Weekly Drovers' Journal*; *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 16, 1880. "A portion of the cattle sent [from Idaho] into Wyoming [in 1880] were shipped thence by the Union Pacific railroad for Chicago for slaughter, or to Iowa and Nebraska as 'feeders.'" Gordon, "Report," 1101.

<sup>111</sup>Quoted in the *Breeders' Live-Stock Journal* (Beecher, Ill.), March 1882, p. 187.

<sup>112</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, Sept. 22, 1877, quoting the *Weekly Mountaineer*.

<sup>113</sup>*National Live-Stock Journal*, weekly ed. (Chicago), Aug. 18, 1885, p. 567.

<sup>114</sup>*Walla Walla Union*, May 22, 1875; *Morning Oregonian*, Apr. 21, 1876; *Morning Oregonian*, May 2, 1879; *Lewiston Teller*, June 11, June 25, 1880; *Idaho Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 5, 1881; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, June 6, 1882. Several men who bought cattle in the Pacific Northwest before the end of 1882 were members of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. See the membership lists of that association in John Clay, *My Life on the Range*, 69-71, 240-244 (Chicago, c. 1924).

<sup>115</sup>*Cheyenne Weekly Leader*, Sept. 20, 1877.

same time "Messrs. Warner & Curtis, of the 'Poudre,' " were preparing to drive to their ranch on the North Laramie "their herd of Oregon cattle."<sup>116</sup> About a year later, this same newspaper published a notice of a cattle drive from the west, which reads as follows:

...An Oregon paper reports that 100,000 head of cattle from Eastern Oregon and Washington Territory, and from Walla Walla and Yakami [sic] and the Snake river countries, are ready for driving across the continent, some to be held back on the plains of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska for good marketing, others to be driven to Omaha.<sup>117</sup>

For knowledge of this subject we need not rely on newspapers only. From the contemporaneous writings of a British observer, William A. Baillie-Grohman, we may learn still more of the rôle of cattle from the Pacific Northwest in the expanding cattle business in Wyoming and neighboring areas. In 1880 he said:

The general public voice declares the Oregon and Utah breed to be far superior to Texas cattle; and while the earlier ranchmen in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana had only the latter, the Oregon cows driven to the two last-mentioned territories in 1879 outnumbered Texas stock at least three or four times. At first it was greatly doubted that cattle raised on the Pacific slopes, and especially in the damp, moderately warm climate of Oregon, could possibly stand a Wyoming or Montana winter with their terribly severe snowstorms.<sup>118</sup> Experience, however, has established not only that Oregon stock can withstand great winter hardships, but also that they flourish on Wyoming soil. As both Utah and Oregon cattle fetch comparatively higher prices in Chicago and other great markets, those breeds are now the prime favourites: and, as a natural consequence of the vastly increased demand, cows in Oregon have risen quite 75 per cent. in value within the last two or three years.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1877.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, Aug. 1, 1878.

<sup>118</sup>Baillie-Grohman apparently did not know that the climates of eastern Oregon and eastern Washington are not "damp" like those of the Willamette Valley and Puget Sound.

<sup>119</sup>W. Baillie-Grohman, "Cattle Ranches in the Far West," *Fortnightly Review* (n.s.), 28:447 (1880). With a minor change, this passage was reproduced in his *Camps in the Rockies*..., 346 (New York, 1882). In *ibid.*, 426, he asserted that a herd of "2,000 good Oregon or Utah cows, 75 per cent of which, if carefully selected, with calves, cost in 1879, delivered at ranche" in Montana or in Wyoming, £7,000.

Reports made under the auspices of the Federal Government provide further evidence of an eastward movement of stock cattle from the Far Northwest to ranges farther east. Especially significant, in this connection, is the testimony of an investigator for the Census Office in 1880, the year of the largest cattle drive eastward from the Oregon Country. The monograph based upon that investigation says:

In the spring of 1876, the demands of the live-stock markets in Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Montana, where cattle occupy open ranges, first induced a general driving out of cattle from Oregon and Washington to assist in stocking these regions. The immense drives of 1880 from both Oregon and Washington, the advance of sheep husbandry and agriculture from the west, and the disastrous season of 1879-'80,<sup>120</sup> all concurred in lessening materially the importance of this industry in both Oregon and Washington, a result especially noticeable at the time of this investigation.<sup>121</sup>

Elsewhere in that valuable report occurs this statement:

Owing to the purchase of herds in the northwest to stock ranges in Wyoming, Nebraska, and Montana, the cattle business for the past six years has had a different end in view from that formerly prevailing. Stockmen [in Oregon] have more generally turned their attention to disposing of young cattle to purchasers from other grazing states and territories. A system of sales to special drovers and of personal drives to Wyoming and Colorado was thus inaugurated in 1875.<sup>122</sup>

In another Federal document, a report prepared in 1885 by Joseph Nimmo, Jr., we are told:

<sup>120</sup>The winter of 1879-80, although not generally disastrous in the Pacific Northwest, was especially severe in southern and southeastern Oregon. *Morning Oregonian*, June 22, Sept. 22, Oct. 7, 1880, and Jan. 12, 1881; *Silver State*, Mar. 2, Mar. 22, 1880.

<sup>121</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1080.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*, 1081. "The great number of animals coming into the territory [of Wyoming, in 1880,] was owing to the severe preceding winter and to the driving out of cattle by the advance of sheep and agriculture in Oregon, Washington, and Utah, and to the flight of stock from the drought in Colorado. To these causes was added the demand for stock-cattle in Montana, Wyoming, Dakota, and Nebraska, especially in Wyoming, where 100,000 were located in the new country from the Big Horn mountains to the Little Missouri river." *Ibid.*, 1018.



The range and ranch cattle business of the North has provided an enormous outlet for young cattle from the great State of Texas, the most prolific breeding ground in this country, and it has also provided quite extensively a market for young cattle from the dairy States of the West, and from the State of Oregon and Washington Territory, to be matured and fattened on the northern ranges. . . .

Young cattle were, at an early day in this business, driven from Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington Territory to stock the ranges of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. Latterly, however, the surplus product of Eastern Oregon and Eastern Washington Territory has been chiefly needed for local consumption on the Pacific coast, and for stocking new ranges in Oregon, Washington Territory, and British Columbia.<sup>123</sup>

Federal documents other than those already mentioned tell a similar story. The reports of the governors of Wyoming Territory to the Secretary of the Interior for the years from 1878 to 1883, for example, amply confirm the testimony given above. These reports leave no doubt that cattle from ranges in the Far Northwest were being bought in considerable numbers for the purpose of stocking ranges in Wyoming. Writing in the autumn of 1878, Governor John W. Hoyt said that Wyoming cattlemen could get stocking cattle either from Texas or the Pacific Northwest, but that Texas cattle were cheaper than "Western" cattle. Then he remarked significantly: "At first the supply of young cattle was almost wholly from Texas, but those from the West (from the Territories and from Oregon) are now preferred."<sup>124</sup> Again, in his report for 1880, Hoyt wrote as follows:

<sup>123</sup>Nimmo, "The Range and Ranch Cattle Traffic," 49, 56-57. John Hailey, delegate from Idaho to the Congress, said in the spring of 1885 that there were virtually no Texas cattle in Idaho. He declared, "The bulk of our stock comes from Oregon." *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>124</sup>45 Congress, 3 Session, 1878-79, *House Executive Documents*, 9:1160 (Serial 1850). On the same page Governor Hoyt said that a person wishing to enter the cattle business in Wyoming could either buy cattle that had been driven into that territory from Texas, Montana, Oregon, or Washington, or he could go to any one of these places and buy a herd and then drive it to his range. The prices he quoted for Texas cattle and for western cattle show that the latter were much more valuable than the former. On page 1162 the governor said: "Three-year-olds are often sold, but the more common ages at which cattle are turned off are four and five. When they are brought from remote places, as from Texas or Oregon, it is considered better

The grazing interest is still foremost, as it is likely to be for some years to come, and has made steady advancement. The former herds have, in many cases, very considerably added to their natural increase by importations from the States and Territories farther west, and a considerable number of herds entirely new have been introduced, not only in sections hitherto partially occupied, but also in larger regions, as, for example, in the Powder and Tongue River sections, until very recently wholly unoccupied except by herds of buffalo. . . .

It is also worthy of note that our cattle are quite rapidly improving in quality. There are fewer importations of young stock than formerly from Texas, and a correspondingly large number from the West, where considerable attention is now given to the improvement of the native stock by the infusion of better blood.<sup>125</sup>

Finally, after again pointing out the fact that "Oregon & other western" cattle brought higher prices than Texas cattle, Hoyt, in his report for 1881, remarked significantly: "Prices full 25 per cent. higher than the previous years, and likely to continue, in view of the falling off in the export supply of the Pacific States and Territories, and the increased demand from the Eastern States and the Old World."<sup>126</sup> What Governor Hoyt had predicted, his successor, William Hale, fully confirmed. Writing on November 10, 1883, he declared: "Formerly large herds of cattle were driven every year to Wyoming from Oregon and the Territories of the Pacific slope, but these drives from the west have now almost entirely ceased."<sup>127</sup>

No less significant is the testimony of other contemporaries—the testimony of men who either were directly interested in the cattle business in Wyoming or who by personal contacts knew much about that business. For example, in a letter from Cheyenne on November 21, 1880, Thomas Sturgis, a stockman who for several years was secretary of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, wrote: "The cattle on these ranges,

to keep them over to the second year than to sell them the first year after importation. . . ." This entire report is a valuable treatise on the cattle industry in Wyoming.

<sup>125</sup>46 Congress, 3 Session, 1880-81, *House Executive Documents*, 10:525-526 (Serial 1960).

<sup>126</sup>47 Congress, 1 Session, 1881-82, *House Executive Documents*, 10:1059 (Serial 2018).

<sup>127</sup>48 Congress, 1 Session, 1883-84, *House Executive Documents*, 11:576 (Serial 2191).



with the exception of those that came through this year from Texas or Oregon, went into the winter in good order—decidedly better than in 1879.”<sup>128</sup> Of like import is an observation of another widely known Wyoming cattleman, John Clay, who wrote in his later years that early in the 1880s he had observed in the Sweetwater Valley “a fine class of cattle, mostly bred up from herds that had come from Oregon and Washington territories [*sic*].”<sup>129</sup> Equally important is a report of a large cattle firm operating in Wyoming, the Swan Land and Cattle Company, which was read at a meeting in Edinburgh on July 30, 1883, and which contains this statement: “The cattle on the south range are a good lot, mostly Hereford crosses, and those on the Northwest are mostly Oregon Shorthorn crosses. The company have now over 100,000 cattle on the ranges, whereas there were only 87,000 in the original inventory.”<sup>130</sup> Finally, a statement by Morton E. Post,<sup>131</sup> sometime delegate from Wyoming to the Congress, has a significant bearing upon this subject. This statement, which Nimmo appended to his report on the range and ranch cattle traffic, reads, in part, as follows:

The range-cattle business of Wyoming began along from 1868 to 1870. From that time to about 1876 or 1878 the great bulk of the cattle were brought from Texas. About three-fourths of the entire stock were steers, and the rest cows and heifers. After that the rangemen imported largely from Nevada and Oregon and the Territories of Montana, Idaho, and Utah, and also some from Colorado—mixed herds of cattle. The cattle imported from Utah, Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana were a good class of cattle, being composed mainly of improved natives, and largely also of improved Texas stock. . . . We have practically exhausted the supply of Nevada, Oregon, and Washington Territory. . . .<sup>132</sup>

<sup>128</sup>*Weekly Drovers' Journal*, Nov. 25, 1880.

<sup>129</sup>John Clay, *My Life on the Range*, 38.

<sup>130</sup>*Breeders' Journal* (Beecher, Ill.), September 1883, p. 545.

<sup>131</sup>Morton Everet Post, a Democrat, was the delegate from Wyoming to the Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth Congresses. *A Biographical Congressional Dictionary . . . , 1774-1911*, 932 (Washington, 1913).

<sup>132</sup>Nimmo, “The Range and Ranch Cattle Traffic,” 184, 187. Between 1877 and 1880 there was a considerable movement of both beef and stock cattle from Nevada to Wyoming. Gordon, “Report,” 1063.

All the testimony thus far assembled points to one conclusion. The reports of newspapers published in the Oregon Country and elsewhere in the American West, the writings of a British observer, special reports for the Federal Government, the observations of governors of Wyoming and of other persons who knew at first hand the cattle industry in Wyoming—all these writings clearly establish the fact that for a few years cattle from the Pacific Northwest were moving eastward in considerable numbers to new ranges in Wyoming and elsewhere. Here we might rest the case, but there is also additional evidence in newspapers published east of Wyoming and Colorado, newspapers whose editors were under professional obligation to keep themselves informed concerning the cattle trade of the West. One such editor, writing at the beginning of 1881, declared: “Nearly all the cattle men of Wyoming are getting out of Texas cattle and are building up their cow herds and getting young stock from the extreme Western Country, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington Territory. . . .”<sup>133</sup> In like manner, some three years later, the editor of the *National Stockman*, impressed by the increase in the value of cows in the West within a brief period, remarked on this fact as follows: “. . . with the giving out of stocker supplies in Oregon, Montana, and elsewhere, ranchmen began to see that they must raise their own stockers, and the cow commenced straightway to increase in value. . . .”<sup>134</sup> No less impressed by changes that were taking place in the western cattle business was the editor of a Kansas newspaper, who, in the summer of 1884, wrote as follows:

One of the most remarkable features of the western cattle business has been the movement from Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri of young breeding stock and stock steers. At least 150,000 head have been so taken by Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado and Montana. Oregon, which in former times was the chief source of stock cattle supplies for the States and Territories named, has been too closely drained to yield any more for the present. This western exodus of thrifty, well-bred young cattle must make a great impression on the quality of the western range stock within the immediate future. In the light of five years ago this

<sup>133</sup>*Weekly Drovers' Journal*, Jan. 13, 1881, quoting the *St. Joseph Gazette* (Mo.).

<sup>134</sup>Quoted in *Weekly Drovers' Journal*, Mar. 20, 1884.

would have had the appearance of carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance.<sup>135</sup>

That cattle from the Pacific Northwest were bought in considerable numbers for several years before 1883 to stock ranges in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska, we now can have no doubt. The demonstration would be even more convincing if we could name more of the men who bought for stocking purposes the cattle that were driven eastward from the Oregon Country and if we could tell how many cattle these men bought and to what ranges they drove them. Detailed studies of several regions of the great western cattle country, studies like that in one chapter of Charles Lindsay's monograph, would doubtless enlarge our knowledge of this phase of the subject.<sup>136</sup> Lindsay has shown that the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming was stocked with cattle between 1879 and 1884 and that within that period at least two herds of Oregon cattle were driven there. One of these herds was owned by Charles Carter and consisted of at least 3,000 head; the other, owned by Henry T. Lovell, consisted of 12,000 head.<sup>137</sup>

Though it would help us to understand the movement of cattle from the Pacific Northwest to ranges in Montana and Wyoming, the knowledge gained by such studies would greatly increase our understanding of the movement of cattle from the Far Northwest to ranges in Colorado or Nebraska. That cattle from the Oregon Country entered Colorado and Nebraska, perhaps in considerable numbers, during the period covered by this article we certainly know. The sources already cited make clear that fact. And the proof already submitted of their entering Colorado is strengthened by the testimony of the editor of a Colorado newspaper. Having asserted early in 1881 that livestock interests in Colorado had been adversely affected during 1880, this editor then remarked: "There has not been so many cattle driven into the State from either Oregon or Texas as in past years, and there has not been the anxiety to purchase cattle . . ."<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup>*Breeders' Gazette* (Chicago), 5:884 (June 5, 1884), quoting the *Barber County Index* (Kans.). The italics are mine.

<sup>136</sup>Charles Lindsay, *The Big Horn Basin*, ch. 4 (Lincoln, Nebr., 1932).

<sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 98, 101.

<sup>138</sup>*National Live-Stock Journal*, monthly ed., February 1881, p. 2, quoting the *Colorado Farmer*.

Of the ownership of Oregon cattle in Colorado and of the distribution of such cattle in that State, as yet virtually nothing is known. A recent historian of the range-cattle industry in Colorado does not even mention Oregon cattle.<sup>139</sup> Of the ownership and distribution of Oregon cattle in Nebraska we know nothing at all.

The eastward movement of cattle had profound effects upon the Pacific Northwest. Within a few years the cattlemen of that region emerged from the dark shadows of depression into the clear light of a brief but booming prosperity. By the early summer of 1881, thanks to the great drives of the years immediately preceding and to the devastating winter of 1880-81, the surplus cattle had been removed from the ranges. As early as 1881, some persons in the Pacific Northwest were worrying about the prospect of a beef famine, and, as the months of 1882 rolled by, editors in widely separated areas of that vast country were expressing their deep concern about the rising prices of beef.<sup>140</sup> In May 1882, the price of beef in Portland had advanced to 20 cents a pound for choice cuts.<sup>141</sup> In October of that year fat cattle in Wasco County were bringing \$30 to \$35 a head, and at the same time steers in the Walla Walla Valley were in demand at \$40 to \$45 a head.<sup>142</sup> Prices continued to soar during 1883, and every community in the Oregon Country was affected by the rise.<sup>143</sup> "Beef is worth double what it was a year ago, and is worth three times

<sup>139</sup>Ora Brooks Peake, *The Colorado Range Cattle Industry* (Glendale, Calif., 1937).

<sup>140</sup>*North Pacific Coast* (New Tacoma, Wash.), May 16, 1881, reprinting a letter from the Kittitas Valley to the *Chicago Times*; *Yakima Record*, May 27, 1882; *North-West Tribune*, July 14, 1882; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, July 22, 1882; *Oregon and Washington Farmer* (Portland, Oreg.), October 1882, p. 6-7; *Pomeroy Republican* (Pomeroy, Wash.), Dec. 9, 1882. Late in the spring of 1882, the *Walla Walla Statesman* said: "Cattle dealers inform us that cattle have raised [sic] no less than 33 per cent the past few months, and this is not for speculative purposes, but for beef for the home market." Quoted in the *Clarke County Register*, May 4, 1882.

<sup>141</sup>*Washington Democrat*, May 24, 1882.

<sup>142</sup>*Clarke County Register*, Oct. 5, Oct. 19, 1882.

<sup>143</sup>*Yakima Signal* (Yakima City, Wash.), Mar. 24, 1883; *Morning Oregonian*, Feb. 5, Mar. 7, 1883; *North-West Tribune*, Mar. 16, 1883; *Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 22, 1883; *Clarke County Register*, May 3, 1883.

as much as it was three years ago," wrote the editor of a Boise City newspaper in March of that year.<sup>144</sup> "Five years ago," said the editor of the *Morning Oregonian* on March 7, 1883, "before the hungry Kansas men began coming in here to buy cattle for shipment to New York via Cheyenne, there was no very ready sale for average beef cattle at \$14 per head. Now the same grade of beasts command from \$42 to \$50 per head delivered anywhere within 200 miles of Portland." In June the editor of the *Kittitas Standard* wrote:

Cattle are now as good as gold, and owners, in our opinion, need not fear a decline in prices. . . . On Wednesday we heard a prominent buyer of our valley offer as high as \$60 for a number to make up his complement to send over the pass. We also heard a rumor that Thorp & Croquette will offer \$50 a head. Judging from these incidents we think owners of good marketable cattle need not feel alarm as regarding a downward tendency in prices. We think the reverse will be the case.<sup>145</sup>

The price of cattle in the Pacific Northwest continued to advance until 1885. In January 1885, the average price of oxen and other cattle in Oregon was \$27.04, a price considerably higher than that of January 1872. Before the end of that year, a sharp decline had taken place, and never again during the 1880s did the average price of oxen and other cattle anywhere in the Pacific Northwest attain the January 1885 level.<sup>146</sup>

The situation confronting cattlemen in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1880s was perplexing. Should these cattlemen enlarge their holdings, or should they contract them? Was the advance in prices going to be relatively permanent, or would the market soon collapse? The cattlemen in that region were in the position of men playing with stocks in a rising market.<sup>147</sup> Their perplexity, however, was destined to be of relatively short duration, for the cattle business in the Pacific Northwest was even then in a period of rapid transition.

<sup>144</sup>*Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman*, Mar. 22, 1883.

<sup>145</sup>*Kittitas Standard* (Ellensburg, Wash.), June 30, 1883.

<sup>146</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Reports*, 1886-1889, *passim*.

<sup>147</sup>See the article entitled "The Cattle Trade," based upon a letter from a resident of southeastern Oregon, in the *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 11, 1882; see also another article with the same title in *ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1882.

The great significance to the Pacific Northwest of the clearing of surplus cattle from its ranges, in fact, did not consist in a brief but feverish prosperity for cattlemen and a sharp rise in the cost of living for people generally. A greater significance lay in the fact that the eastward drives were an indication of an industry in retreat. Whether cattlemen in the Pacific Northwest at the time knew the truth about their business or not—and doubtless many of them did know it—the range-cattle industry in that region had reached its peak by the opening of the 1880s. In some places the ranges were wearing out, and in many parts of the grazing country cattlemen were being crowded hard by sheepmen or farmers or both. Especially was this the case in north-eastern Oregon and eastern Washington.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, by 1883 railroads were bringing most areas of the Pacific Northwest closer to the markets of the Middle West and thus were helping to undermine the range-cattle business of the former region. For settlers in great numbers entered the Oregon Country by these railroads, and a part of the crops that they produced moved out of that country by these railroads. In 1887 an official report of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company stated: "There has been a steady movement of settlers from the East to the Pacific Slope, and the crops of all kinds in Washington Territory are reported this season as the largest in the history of that territory."<sup>149</sup> Equally enlightening are other official reports, especially those of the governors of Washington Territory to the

<sup>148</sup>In the spring of 1880, the *Klickitat Sentinel* said that stockmen in Klickitat County, Washington, alarmed at the rapid settlement of that county, were gathering their herds and driving them eastward, either for the purpose of selling them or of continuing their business in the North Platte country. Quoted in the *Morning Oregonian*, May 11, 1880. Commenting on the changing economic conditions in the Pacific Northwest, the Reverend G. H. Atkinson, an Oregon pioneer of 1848, remarked in 1880 as follows: "The large stockraisers [of Oregon] now seek for ranges in Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana." *Morning Oregonian*, Oct. 26, 1880. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1883, quoted the *Walla Walla Watchman* as follows: "Walla Walla county is no longer a stock country simply because our public lands, once idle, unclaimed and covered with bunch grass, are today farms fenced in and sowed in wheat. . . . At present wheat is king. . . ."

<sup>149</sup>Northern Pacific Railroad, *Report of the Board of Directors*, 1887, p. 48 (New York, 1887).

Secretary of the Interior in 1888 and 1889. In 1888 Governor Eugene Semple wrote:

The general tenor of all letters received from stockmen is to the effect that the ranges are being rapidly curtailed by homestead, pre-emption, and other entries of the public land, and by purchases of railroad land. This fact is very clearly exhibited by the returns from the different land offices, tabulated under the head of settlement of lands, in another part of this pamphlet. . . .

From all accounts the days of large ranges have passed in Washington Territory, and the bunch grass is giving place to fields of wheat and other cereals.<sup>150</sup>

A year later Governor Miles C. Moore reported:

The area of arable land in the prairie country east of the mountains is rapidly diminishing. In fact, no considerable portion now remains available for homestead. . . .

The Northern Pacific Railroad Company report having sold during the year 416,321 acres at an average price of \$3.68 per acre. These sales were made to 2,279 purchasers. . . .

The stock-grower with his herds is constantly being forced back for range to localities remote from railroads where farming can not yet be profitably carried on.<sup>151</sup>

Even more convincing proof of economic changes in the Oregon Country than the testimony just given is provided by the census statistics of 1880 and 1890. If the findings of the Tenth Census are compared with those of the Eleventh Census, the rapidity of economic changes in the cattle country of the Far Northwest during the 1880s will seem almost astonishing. The increase of population, the extension of the area of farming land, the increase in the output of farm crops, the increase in the number of sheep—these changes reveal, as nothing else could, the fact that the range-cattle business in the whole Oregon Country was rapidly being crowded from places to which sheepmen could drive their herds and from places where farmers could cultivate the soil.<sup>152</sup> How-

ever revealing they may be, these statistics need not be relied upon to the exclusion of other evidence. If we compare a political map of the Pacific Northwest of 1880 with a like map of 1890, we shall discover still another reason why the range-cattle business in the Pacific Northwest was rapidly disappearing. So rapidly did settlers enter the region during the decade that eight new counties were formed in eastern Oregon, eight in eastern Washington, and five in Idaho.

Here a word of caution should be interjected. Despite a sharp rise in the price of beef in the region early in the 1880s, there was no beef famine in the Pacific Northwest and no great scarcity of cattle. Many persons were upset by the fact that the prices of prosperity had supplanted the prices of depression.<sup>153</sup> Because cattlemen in the Oregon Country could sell their cattle in a rising market east of the Rockies for a few years, the prices of cattle in the Pacific Northwest remained high. When the market prices for cattle were declining in Chicago between 1885 and 1889, the market prices for cattle in the Pacific Northwest were also declining. Whereas the decline in price for the best grade of beef in Chicago was from \$7.15 a hundred pounds in January 1884, to \$5.40 a hundred pounds in January 1889, the decline in the average price of oxen and other cattle in the State of Oregon was from \$27.04 in January 1885, to \$17.15 in January 1889.<sup>154</sup> In the meantime, however, the number of cattle had been increasing in the Pacific Northwest. According to estimates of the United States Department of Agriculture, the total number of oxen and other cattle in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington in January 1884 was 970,726, whereas their total number of cattle in January 1889 was 1,506,356.<sup>155</sup>

grass fields of Montana, have been gradually diminishing for the last few years, and the heavy immigration settling in that country has about closed out the stock interest. . . . Some [of the stockmen] are moving their herds into Montana and Dakota, some are reducing their herds and raising better grades, while others have closed out and joined the van of home seekers, raising wheat and other cereals." *Stock Growers Journal* (Miles City, Mont.), May 4, 1889.

<sup>153</sup>*Kittitas Standard*, June 30, 1883.

<sup>154</sup>U. S. Department of the Interior, *Report*, 1888, 1:xxxv; 51 Congress, 1 Session, May 1, 1890, *Senate Report* 829, p. 1-2 (Serial 2705); U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Reports*, 1886-1889, *passim*.

<sup>155</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Report*, 1884, 444, and 1889, 236.

<sup>150</sup>*Report of the Governor of Washington Territory to the Secretary of the Interior*, 1888, p. 13-14 (Washington, 1888).

<sup>151</sup>51 Congress, 1 Session, 1889-90, *House Executive Documents*, 13:510-511, 531 (Serial 2726).

<sup>152</sup>In the spring of 1889, B. F. Morris, a prominent stockman of Lewiston, Idaho, spoke of the "stock interests" of the Pacific Northwest as follows: "The stock interests of north Idaho, Washington, and eastern Oregon, where has been the finest range in the great Northwest, not even excelled by the boundless



But within that period of years the number of cattle on the ranges in the Pacific Northwest dwindled greatly. It is perhaps significant that in the Census of 1890 the returns of range cattle in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington were not segregated from the returns therein of cattle on farms. Yet the census takers found more cattle in the Pacific Northwest in 1890 than in 1880.<sup>156</sup> In the meantime, of course, a growing population in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington had increased the demand in that region for beef produced in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>157</sup>

The rapid decline of the range-cattle interest in the Pacific Northwest during the 1880s, however, should not be permitted to obscure the immediate major significance of the eastward movement of cattle from the Oregon Country between 1875 and 1885. Within that decade a business that through long years had been regional broke the bonds of its isolation. Early in that period cattle from the Pacific Northwest began to enter national and international markets, and thus for the first time cattlemen of the Oregon Country began to envision for themselves freedom from dependence upon local and California markets. Within that decade also herds of cattle from the Far Northwest mingled with herds of cattle from Texas and the Eastern States upon ranges in a newer cattle country east of Idaho. By the opening of the 1880s, western cattlemen knew the cattle trails leading eastward from the Far Northwest as well as they knew the cattle trails leading northward from Texas. By that time the range and ranch cattle area of the Far West had become a unified area. Men of that time who were interested in the cattle business of the Great West knew that fact. Editors of newspapers east of the Rockies as well as editors of newspapers west of the Rockies knew that fact well. Clarence Gordon, who supervised the preparation of a monograph on the breeding of livestock in the Far West for the census of 1880, knew that fact very well. Cattle buyers of the Middle West and cattle breeders of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska knew that fact best of all.

<sup>156</sup>Gordon, "Report," 1103; U. S. Census Office, 11th Census, 1890, *Report on the Statistics of Agriculture*, 282, 303, 312-313.

<sup>157</sup>On the decline of the range cattle industry in the Pacific Northwest, see J. Orin Oliphant, *The Range Cattle Industry in the Oregon Country to 1890*, ch. 11 (doctoral dissertation, Harvard College Library).

Why, then, was that fact soon forgotten? The answer to this question is not hard to find. Just as the range-cattle business in the Pacific Northwest was entering upon a rapid declension, the range-cattle industry of the Great Plains was entering upon a great boom.<sup>158</sup> Soon the attention of the American people, and that of other peoples, was fixed upon the "cow country" of the Great Plains. Soon Texas cattle, Texas trails, and "Texas fever" became important subjects. Soon Oregon cattle and Oregon cattle trails were forgotten subjects. Soon the conception of a "greater cow country" of the Far West dropped from view. By 1885 the habit of thinking about the range-cattle business that has persisted was beginning to form. In that year, as we have seen, Joseph Nimmo, Jr., brought out an important report on the range and ranch cattle traffic. Of the cattle area of the Far West, he wrote:

The western and northwestern range and ranch cattle area of the United States embraces the principal part of the Indian Territory, the western portions of Kansas, Nebraska, and Dakota, the Territories of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, the States of Colorado and Nevada, and portions of California, Oregon, and Washington Territory.

This vast area, embracing 1,159,907 square miles, or 742,340,480 acres, has within the last fifteen years been largely devoted to the cattle business. *The portion of this region in which the raising of cattle is chiefly carried on is, however, distinctively known as "The Plains."*<sup>159</sup>

The Nimmo report dismissed with scant notice the contribution of the Oregon Country to the expanding cattle business on the Great Plains, and, fairly accurately as of the year in which it was written, relegated the cattle business of the Pacific Northwest to a place of little importance except to that region. While the Nimmo report circulated widely, the Gordon report lay buried in the third volume of the Tenth Census. And after Nimmo came other writers, many of them—men who popularized the story of cattle-breeding on the Great Plains; but no popularizer concerned himself with the story of the driving of cattle from the Oregon Country to Montana, Wyoming,

<sup>158</sup>Dale, *The Range Cattle Industry*, 90; Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman*, 83-113.

<sup>159</sup>Nimmo, "The Range and Ranch Cattle Traffic," 12. The italics are mine.

Colorado, and Nebraska. No man who later became nationally prominent, moreover, entered the cattle business west of the Rockies. No Theodore Roosevelt ever rode on the ranges of the Oregon Country. No cattleman of the Far Northwest ever occupied the White House. It is no matter for surprise, therefore, that the role of the Far Northwest in the history of the

range-cattle industry in the United States has been neglected. There is need, however, of our reorienting our thinking on this subject. There is need of our realizing that a history of the range-cattle industry that ignores the history of the range-cattle industry in the country west of the Rocky Mountains is not a history of the range-cattle industry in the Great American West.

## THE RISE OF THE NONPARTISAN LEAGUE IN NORTH DAKOTA, 1915-1917

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The Nonpartisan League which was organized in North Dakota in 1915 was not an isolated and spontaneous movement; it was but one of several organized protests of farmers and laborers that swept the United States in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Organized labor, largely through the efforts of the American Federation of Labor, had made tremendous gains during 1898-1903, having branched out "into new geographical regions, the South and the West."<sup>1</sup> Dissatisfaction among workers in the lumber camps of the Pacific Northwest and the textile mills of Massachusetts had culminated in the activities of the radical Industrial Workers of the World, organized in 1905 by Socialists as a rival of the American Federation of Labor.<sup>2</sup> Unrest among mine workers in Colorado, Utah, Montana, and Nevada also had sent union organizers hurrying into these States.<sup>3</sup> Socialism had acquired a substantial following among the American-born and had made "some noted converts among the rising class of American 'publicists'" whose influence was not "to be measured

only by its polling strength."<sup>4</sup> The "trust-busting" campaign of Theodore Roosevelt which was running in high gear in the first decade of the twentieth century appealed to the middle classes, especially to the farmers and moderate reformers. Subsequently, Woodrow Wilson's "New Freedom" call rang loudly in the ears of the Nation.<sup>5</sup> In the South the Farmers' Union held out the promise of better cotton prices; while in the upper Mississippi Valley the American Society of Equity made similar promises to the grain growers.<sup>6</sup> The Farmers' Grain Dealers' Association also sought marketing reforms but by less radical measures.<sup>7</sup> Robert M. La Follette's denunciation of the railroads, monopoly, and corruption in government endeared him to these same elements and brought him victory in the first presidential primary election held in North Dakota.<sup>8</sup> The Canadian

<sup>4</sup> Commons, and others, *History of Labour in the United States*, 2:533. See also Lewis J. Duncan, "Socialist Politics in Butte, Montana," *International Socialist Review*, 12:287-291 (November 1911). *Ibid.*, 820 (June 1912), gives the Socialist platform on agriculture in 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Norman J. Ware, *Labor in Modern Industrial Society*, 324 (Boston, 1935); Richard Boeckel, "The Farm Issue in National Politics," in *Editorial Research Reports*, July 17, 1928, p. 617; Dwight L. Dumond, *Roosevelt to Roosevelt*, 103-108 (New York, 1937).

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *Marketing Agricultural Products*, 241-250 (New York, 1921).

<sup>7</sup> Oscar N. Refsell, "The Farmers' Elevator Movement," *Journal of Political Economy*, 22:969 (December 1914).

<sup>8</sup> *The New International Year Book*, 1912, 476; *Industrial Freedom*, 1:18-20 (September 1915).

<sup>1</sup> John R. Commons, and others, *History of Labour in the United States*, 2:522 (New York, 1918).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 523; Paul F. Brissenden, "Industrial Workers of the World," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 8:17 (New York, 1932); *The New International Year Book*, 1912, 330-331, (New York, 1913); Fred E. Haynes, *Social Politics in the United States*, 218-237 (Boston and New York, 1924); B. H. Williams, "Sixth I. W. W. Convention," *International Socialist Review*, 12:300-302 (November 1911).

<sup>3</sup> M. P. Haggarty, "Recollections of Socialist Beginnings in Montana," *International Socialist Review*, 12:104-106 (August 1911).

farmers who had successfully carried their fight against the organized grain trade to a sympathetic government had become the envy of the American farmers across the border.<sup>9</sup>

Two of these protest movements had made inroads in North Dakota prior to the organization of the Nonpartisan League: the Socialist Party and the North Dakota Federation of Labor, which in many instances were the same, concentrated their activities in the urban areas; while the American Society of Equity combed the rural areas for support of its cooperative marketing program. Both these groups, whether they knew it or not, were protesting against the effects of a maturing capitalism. Labor was protesting against unemployment, low wages, poor working conditions, and long hours, and it sought to remedy these conditions by organizing; the farmers were protesting against low farm prices, high transportation costs, unfavorable marketing conditions, and monopoly.

The North Dakota Society of Equity, the most prominent farmer organization in the Dakotas since Granger days, had obtained a substantial membership in the State.<sup>10</sup> In 1907 when the organization still advocated withholding wheat from market until the price of \$1.00 per bushel was realized, it claimed a membership of 6,000.<sup>11</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Equity Cooperative Exchange was organized by a group of grain growers who had met in Minneapolis on May 30, 1908 for this purpose.<sup>12</sup> The exchange was incorporated in 1911, it being the policy of the Equity, like that of other farmer organizations educational in character, to incorporate business organizations to engage in the marketing and purchasing of commodities. Beginning in midyear 1912 the exchange made a determined bid for the marketing of the farmers' grain and ran squarely into the bitter opposition of the organized grain trade. By this time the exchange also had taken up the

fight for the erection of a state-owned terminal elevator, the history of which goes back to the 1890s when a similar proposal was advocated by a coalition of Democrats and Populists.<sup>13</sup>

This elevator issue had become popular in North Dakota politics. In 1912 the people, by a referendum vote of 4 to 1, adopted an amendment to their constitution authorizing the construction and maintenance of a system of state-owned elevators in Wisconsin, Minnesota, or both States. The 1913 legislature, accordingly, passed a bill levying a tax to build and maintain the elevators and instructed the State Board of Control to prepare plans for the project, to estimate costs, to recommend a site, and to report to the 1915 legislature.<sup>14</sup> In 1914 another amendment was passed permitting the location of the elevator within North Dakota.<sup>15</sup>

In the same year Louis B. Hanna, a conservative, was elected governor, having waged his campaign largely in opposition to extravagance in government and the creation of useless and wasteful commissions. His administration shortly secured the repeal of the measures passed by the 1913 legislature providing for the state elevators and also acts providing for smaller funds.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the North Dakota Society of Equity, in anticipation of what the unfriendly Board of Control would report to the legislature, called its annual convention to assemble in Bismarck, the capital, early in February 1915.<sup>17</sup> The Equity also had extended an invitation to the Farmers' Union, a comparatively new organization in the State, to take part in the February convention, to fraternize, and to exchange views on questions confronting farmers.<sup>18</sup> This convention endorsed the terminal elevator bill, and its representatives drew up a bill to present to the

<sup>13</sup>John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt*, 287-289 (Minneapolis, 1931).

<sup>14</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(7):8 (Feb. 17, 1916).

<sup>15</sup>Andrew A. Bruce, *Non-Partisan League*, 57 (New York, 1921).

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>17</sup>Herbert E. Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 43 (New York, 1920); *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, Jan. 31, 1915; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 3, 4, 1915; *Nonpartisan Leader*, 1(1):5-6 (Sept. 23, 1915).

<sup>18</sup>*Cooperators' Herald*, Jan. 1, 1915, p. 4. The Union reported charters authorized for 42 local chapters in North Dakota in 1914. National Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union of America, Tenth Annual Session, Sept. 1-3, 1914, *Minutes*, 18-19.

<sup>9</sup>Harald S. Patton, *Grain Growers' Cooperation in Western Canada*, 114-117 (Cambridge, Mass., 1928); Louis Aubrey Wood, *A History of Farmers' Movements in Canada*, 199-201 (Toronto, 1924).

<sup>10</sup>Herbert S. Schell, "The Grange and the Credit Problem in Dakota Territory," *Agricultural History*, 10:59-83 (April 1936).

<sup>11</sup>*Devils Lake Inter-Ocean* (Devils Lake, N. Dak.), June 28, 1907.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Saloutos, "The Rise of the Equity Cooperative Exchange," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 32:58-62 (June 1945).

legislature.<sup>19</sup> Representatives of the city of St. Paul were on hand to inform the farmers that their city would aid them if the elevator were located there. A feature of the convention was the march to the Capitol to present the demands of the farmers, most prominent among them being the construction of a state-owned terminal elevator.<sup>20</sup> When the convention adjourned, some of the Equity leaders decided to remain in Bismarck until the elevator issue had been decided.

Among the speakers at an Equity rally held the night before the elevator issue came to a final vote was George S. Loftus, the pugnacious sales manager of the Equity Cooperative Exchange and a seasoned campaigner against the organized grain trade. Whether Loftus labored under the pains of an illness that shortly proved fatal or whether he had become unduly embittered because of the unfavorable report of the Board of Control is unknown, but the effects of his talk were generally conceded as being detrimental to the Equity cause.<sup>21</sup> Like Senator La Follette whom he admired, Loftus called the roll of the legislature and in vicious and abusive language denounced those whom he suspected would vote against the measure. A number of legislators were in the audience, and his acts unquestionably compelled some wavering members to vote against the measure.<sup>22</sup> It was killed in the lower house by a vote of 64 to 40, the objection given being that the State was not in a financial position to support the project.<sup>23</sup> Some Equity followers predicted they would return two years hence, but the executive committee of the Equity Cooperative Exchange meeting in Fargo shortly thereafter voted to proceed with plans to finance an elevator to be owned by Equity farmers, relying on the city of St. Paul for the donation of a site.<sup>24</sup>

Other farm leaders, however, did not acquiesce in the decision of the legislature, the report being that the resentment of the farmers had been growing. Reports shortly circulated to the effect that in the course of the debate over the elevator bill, Treadwell Twitchell, a leading opponent of the measure, had angrily told the farmers to "Go home and slop the hogs!"<sup>25</sup> Twitchell and his associates denied the charge, but whether or not it was true is immaterial; many of the farmers believed it, and it spread like wild fire.

Leadership, in the beginning at least, has always played an important part in the organization of reform movements.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, it was a tremendous factor in the new movement that was starting and was supplied by Arthur C. Townley, one of the most gifted farm organizers as well as one of the most colorful personalities in agrarian history. His ability to organize farmers and collect dues had caused many of his adversaries to dub him "After Cash Townley." He had attended the historic Equity convention in February 1915, but not in the capacity of delegate or leader; he probably was contemplating the idea of organizing a farmers' political movement when the psychological moment presented itself.<sup>27</sup> Townley had an interest in the plight of the farmer, because he, himself, had been an unsuccessful farmer and was reputedly in debt to the extent of \$100,000. Socialistic talk was not strange to him, for he had been recruiting members for the Socialist Party of North Dakota.

The radicalism of Townley, in all probability, was influenced by the unsettled surroundings in which he found himself. North Dakota was a young State, having been admitted into the Union in 1889, and its many ethnic groups who were "tenacious in their adherence to Old World traditions" made it seem like the polyglot nations

<sup>19</sup>St. Paul Pioneer Press, Feb. 5, 1915.

<sup>20</sup>Cooperators' Herald, Feb. 5, 1915.

<sup>21</sup>James E. Boyle, "The Agrarian Movement in the Northwest," *American Economic Review*, 8:513 (September 1918).

<sup>22</sup>William Langer, *The Nonpartisan League*, 13-14 (Mandan, N. Dak., 1920). See *Bismarck Tribune*, Feb. 14, 1915, for excerpts from North Dakota newspapers denouncing the activities of Loftus prior to the vote on the elevator bill. See also the *Cooperative Manager and Farmer*, 4(7):29-33 (March 1915), for hostile accounts of Equity activities.

<sup>23</sup>St. Paul Pioneer Press, Feb. 21, 1915.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 22, 1915.

<sup>25</sup>Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 43; Bruce, *Nonpartisan League*, 59; Charles Edward Russell, *The Story of the Nonpartisan League*, 107 (New York, 1920); *Cooperative Manager and Farmer*, 4(7):21 (March 1915). The latter publication, a supporter of Twitchell, described him as a resident of North Dakota "since the real cow boy days." Another publication charged that he came to Bismarck "to be the king bee of the progressive movement" but was defeated for speaker and went over to the opposition camp. *Industrial Freedom*, 1:19 (June 1915).

<sup>26</sup>Richard Schmidt, "Leadership," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 9:282-287 (New York, 1933).

<sup>27</sup>Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 45.



of Europe.<sup>28</sup> According to the 1910 census, there were 156,158 foreign-born whites, representing 25 nationalities and 27 percent of the population at the time. An equal number of natives born of foreign parents raised the total foreign make-up of the State to well over 50 percent. Furthermore, only a small fraction of the native Americans were born on North Dakota soil, and "scarcely any two families [had] come from the same part of the United States..." The restlessness and change so characteristic of pioneer life had not been outgrown. A decade later it was reported that 86 percent of the people of the State lived either on farms or in towns of less than 2,500. The 1920 census showed that 53.4 percent of the population was native-born; 11 percent was born in Russia, 4.7 in Sweden, 4 in Canada, and 12.6 in other foreign countries. Twenty-one percent of all Norwegians in the United States were said to live in North Dakota.<sup>29</sup>

Townley was born in northwestern Minnesota in a region not unlike North Dakota. He attended the high school in Alexandria, Minnesota. As a student he had become interested in debating and other forensic activities and had displayed an interest in religious, political, and economic issues. Townley taught school for awhile but soon tired of the routine of the classroom and set out for the West in search of livelier pursuits.<sup>30</sup> He tried his luck at farming in the extreme western part of North Dakota, near the Montana border, a submarginal farming area.<sup>31</sup> Working with horses was too slow for Townley, so he persuaded

his neighbors to pool their resources and buy a steam tractor and plows. This was soon followed by other innovations, for he had always displayed impatience with doing things on a small scale. After forming a farming syndicate with neighbors, Townley withdrew when the prospects for a good crop looked slim and allowed the other members to divide the seed and equipment and take their chances. Heavy rains, however, soon followed, and as a result those who had been associated with Townley prospered.

After spending a year wandering to the Pacific coast, Townley returned to North Dakota to try flax farming in the Golden Valley where money was being made.<sup>32</sup> During two fairly successful seasons, he expanded his holdings beyond what might be termed "sound economic practices." Soon he came to be known as the "flax king," and land agents pointed him out as a successful farmer, but this reputation was short-lived. His third farming year, 1912, proved disastrous. The payments on the additional land and machinery that he had purchased could not be made, for the season was dry, the harvest small, and the prices low. Townley attributed his failure to the speculators and the "grain gamblers"; he exonerated himself from any responsibility for his mishaps. This argument soon found its way into the "campaign of education" of the Nonpartisan League. Inefficient farm management and weather hazards as causes for small crops, low prices, and small incomes, had no place in Townley's thinking. No responsibility was placed on the farmer for the conditions under which he farmed.

Townley's failure drove him headlong into the Socialist camp of North Dakota, a State that was fertile for the spreading of discontent and the sowing of Socialist propaganda. Commercial wheat farming had brought the farmer in direct relation with the organized grain trade, financial institutions, the railroads, and the town merchants.<sup>33</sup> The grievances of the farmers, in particular, were accentuated by the semiarid conditions prevailing in a large part of the State. The farmers were not familiar with the existing climatic hazards, or else they were indifferent to them and to the need of a diversified agriculture

<sup>28</sup>N. C. Abbott, "Social Center Development in North Dakota," University of North Dakota, *Quarterly Journal*, 2:355 (Grand Forks, July 1912).

<sup>29</sup>H. L. Walster, *The Geography of North Dakota*, 1, 12 (New York, 1923).

<sup>30</sup>Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 46-48.

<sup>31</sup>Macy H. Lapham and party, *Soil Survey of Western North Dakota*, 27-28 (Washington, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, 1910). During 1892-1906 "the acreage devoted to the production of wheat in North Dakota rose from 2,868,729 acres to 5,992,000 acres, giving a total production in the latter year of nearly 88,000,000 bushels." The increased production was due mainly to agricultural expansion in western North Dakota. "In local districts and under unusually favorable conditions a yield of from 35 to 40 bushels per acre is sometimes harvested. The average yield is, however, much lighter, the average yield per acre for the State during the fifteen-year period cited above being 12.6 bushels. A yield of from 12 to 15 bushels per acre is usually considered profitable."

<sup>32</sup>Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 49-50.

<sup>33</sup>James E. Le Rossignol, *What Is Socialism?* 239-240 (New York, 1921); Meyer Jacobstein, "The Aldrich Banking Plan," University of North Dakota, *Quarterly Journal*, 3:154-156 (January 1913).

to insure some income regardless of weather conditions.<sup>34</sup> The Socialists, nevertheless, capitalized on these conditions; they held meetings, sold literature, and canvassed the farming areas for membership.<sup>35</sup>

The Socialist Party of North Dakota was a fairly well organized unit from 1908 to 1914, despite the predominance of agricultural population in the State, and the party's influence was greater than its membership figures would indicate. As early as 1908 it had adopted a platform embodying the chief features of the Nonpartisan League, calling for state-owned elevators and mills, credit banks, and a system of state-owned-and-operated hail insurance. At Minot, a center of radical activities, the Socialists published the *Iconoclast*, which repeatedly urged the farmers

"Wheat farmers repeatedly were warned against the disastrous consequences of single-crop farming. In 1889, for instance, Dakota farmers were advised: 'There is money in gardening, in poultry and eggs, in butter and cheese, and a score of other things which seem trifling to a man who harvests 3,000 or 4,000 bushels of dollar wheat, but supposing there is a hot wind, a lack of rain or a frost? The man who puts all his eggs in one basket is liable to go to smash.' Frank H. Hagerty, *The State of North Dakota, The Statistical, Historical and Political Abstract*, 61 (Aberdeen, S. Dak., 1889).

The dairy commissioner's report for 1910 indicated that diversified farming was not practised in the State because of ignorance or indifference, but due to conditions that were not easy to overcome. The commissioner said; "When we consider the early settlement of this state at a time when it was possible to secure large tracts of land either by purchase at a nominal price, or through governmental regulations, and realize that the great majority of farmers have large farms, that diversified farming means building fences, barns, arranging for pastures and foods for live stock, that it calls for better and a higher grade of help, that it means more labor must be added to the farm, that there will be no months of leisure, and that the size of the farm practically prohibits their handling it in the most approved methods advocated by scientific agricultural experts, we realize more fully what it means for the average grain farmer to take up diversified farming. It is not wholly prejudice, but a condition, that confronts them . . ." *Biennial Report of the Dairy Commissioner to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, of the Dairy Interests*, 1910, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Arthur Le Sueur, *The Nonpartisan League*, 2 (manuscript in Minnesota Historical Society); *Iconoclast* (Minot), July 17, 1914. Beecher Moore was a pioneer Socialist in North Dakota.

to organize for political action.<sup>36</sup> It saw the American Society of Equity movement as a step in the direction of socialism but hardly sufficient to achieve the goal the Socialists desired. "We recognize the Equity as well as every other radical organization or movement, no matter what its name or label as a social force, and therefore a part of the great process of social evolution which will result in the eventual socialization of the nation's industries. It is the quintessence of jackassable stupidity to ignore any of the intermediate stages in the development of the social progress."<sup>37</sup> Experience soon pointed out that the Socialist program was more popular than the party itself and quite appropriately so; the Farmers' Alliance had agitated for some of the same measures a couple of decades earlier.

In time the Socialists provided for an organization department within their party, which made it possible for non-Socialists to join without having to sign "the red card of terrible reputation." The establishment of the department was an opportunity to prove that the party itself did not appeal to the farmer but that its platform did. Socialist propaganda emphasized, among other things, that the farmer as an individual had certain functions to perform if he was to better himself; he had to learn to manage efficiently, to work diligently, to initiate state-owned mills and elevators, to launch cooperative associations, to practise diversified farming, and to use every other available opportunity to free himself from the "dominant" economic forces that ruled him.<sup>38</sup> The Socialist argument, in other words, placed some of the responsibility for the plight of the farmer on the farmer himself. This argument did not savor well for the welfare of the party. The farmer who attended a Socialist meeting and then went home to his tumble-down house, his

<sup>36</sup>*Iconoclast*, July 17, 1914. See Haynes, *Social Politics in the United States*, 204-208 for the "Distribution of Political Strength" of the Socialists in the Nation. Minot was the headquarters for the North Dakota Socialists. North Dakota Dept. of State, *Legislative Manual*, 1913, xxiii, 265-267. See also Le Sueur, *The Nonpartisan League*, 1-2.

<sup>37</sup>*Iconoclast*, June 25, 1915.

<sup>38</sup>Henry P. Richardson, "Scientific Organizing and the Farmer," *International Socialist Review*, 15:554-558 (March 1915), discusses Socialist organization problems among North Dakota farmers. The North Dakota Socialists used Ford cars to contact farmers before the Nonpartisan League was organized.

uneducated children, his ragged overworked wife, his weedy fields, and his rusty and outmoded machinery and then applied the doctrines he had heard would not have a comfortable feeling, for he could not escape from some measure of responsibility for his condition.<sup>39</sup>

In 1914 Townley volunteered to serve as an organizer for the organization department of the Socialist Party to help test out the differences in popularity between the party and its platform. He was supplied with plenty of Socialist literature and an automobile with which to travel from place to place to hold meetings arranged for him by headquarters. Townley sold the literature and took pledges from farmers who joined the organization department, not the Socialist party, taking post-dated checks when cash was not available.<sup>40</sup> Monthly dues of \$1.00 were to be paid, and the platform and the candidates of the organization were to be supported.

Townley's success was almost instant. In less than three months, he had four organizers at work, who, it was claimed, were members of the Socialist Party. There is still a difference of opinion, however, on whether Townley himself was actually a member. The expenses of the organizers were paid from the receipts for the literature, from contributions, and from the thousands of pledges received. This experiment, however, was short-lived, for at the Socialist convention in 1915 the state committee recommended the discontinuance of the work of the

organization department. It was charged that such a program was inconsistent with the future welfare of the party and the farmers. It was pointed out that the organization department had as many members as did the Socialist Party, the main difference being that the members of the latter were educated on the subject of socialism, while those of the former were not. When the Socialist Party refused to permit Townley to continue organizing for the organization department, he felt aggrieved. Consequently, when A. E. Bowen, an associate, recommended that they organize a nonpartisan organization having nothing to do with the Socialist Party, Townley was immediately impressed with the idea.<sup>41</sup> Townley and Bowen were both credited with being the "midwives" of the Nonpartisan League, and although the statement to the effect that "Townley stole the Nonpartisan idea from Bowen" frequently circulated the fact was that the organizing genius of Townley placed the new organization on its feet.<sup>42</sup>

Political action appeared feasible to the farmers at the time because it held out promises that were not to be achieved readily by other slower means. Besides the rate at which North Dakota farmers were joining the organization department of the Socialist Party indicated that a new movement was on foot; all that was needed was the leadership. The grievances of the farmers against the organized grain trade were well known, and the psychological moment for the new movement had already presented itself.

Organization of the Nonpartisan League began shortly after the memorable Equity meeting of February 1915. At this convention Townley renewed his acquaintanceship with F. B. Wood, a highly respected and admired Equity leader, whom he had met in the course of his work for the Socialist Party. Conversations between the two shortly followed, and Wood later admitted that he "had told Townley that he could come to our farm when spring broke and I would help him get started." Townley, however, did not wait until spring, stating that he could not do so.

<sup>39</sup>Le Sueur, *The Nonpartisan League*, 5; *Milwaukee Leader*, July 29, 1916. One Socialist leader charged: "The Socialist organization of North Dakota is today a travesty and a farce. The red-card organizers of the league are yet 'comrades' and control the Socialist Party."

<sup>40</sup>S. R. Maxwell, *The Nonpartisan League from the Inside*, 44 (St. Paul, 1918).

<sup>39</sup>In 1912 the Socialist Party received 7.9 percent of the State's total vote. It was surpassed by Oklahoma, Nevada, Montana, Washington, California, Idaho, Oregon, Florida, Arizona, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, Minnesota, and Utah in the order listed. The total Socialist vote in 1912 was 897,011, this being 5.9 percent of the total national vote. In the presidential election of 1916, North Dakota was surpassed in Socialist strength by Oklahoma, Nevada, Florida, Wisconsin, Idaho, Washington, Arizona, Montana, and Texas. *The American Labor Yearbook*, 1917-18, 336-337 (New York, 1918). In 1914 the membership of the Socialist Party in Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota, was 1,589, 1,644, and 4,965 respectively; in 1915, 1,057, 1,107 and 3,542. *Ibid.*, 1916, 95-96. According to *ibid.*, 1917-18, 338, "American Socialism seems . . . to have its chief strength, not in the manufacturing centers, but in those Western states where mining and farm tenantry prevail."

<sup>40</sup>Le Sueur, *The Nonpartisan League*, 4; J. D. Bacon, *A Warning to the Farmer against Townleyism as Exploited in North Dakota*, 11 (Grand Forks, 1918).



Conversations began again; this time Wood's two sons sat in; and the following morning Townley and Howard Wood, one of the sons "started out with a team and bobsled to call on the neighbors. The Farmers' Nonpartisan Political League of North Dakota had begun organization. . . . Howard Wood furnished the introductions. Townley did the talking. It was an arrangement that later became a standard of methods in League organization work." Howard Wood, the convert, became the "booster" in the township, accompanying the organizer to "break the ice with his neighbors." The League was said to have enrolled twelve members the first day.<sup>43</sup>

Soon the Ford car was introduced by the League in its organizing operations in order to cover wider stretches of territory. That Townley was preparing to deal the State a political blitzkrieg in a day when such terminology was unknown soon became apparent. Organizers and members were cautioned to keep their membership confidential, "to keep all knowledge of the movement from the leeches who sucked their blood," and the work proceeded without organized opposition.<sup>44</sup> One newspaper was quoted as saying: "It is being rumored . . . that a number of strange characters are operating in this part . . . whose business is not definitely known. It is claimed, however, by those who profess to know, that they are organizing a farmers' political league of some kind or other. They go about in Ford cars, leaving town early in the morning and returning late at night. They tell no one their business voluntarily and when the question is put directly to them, reply that they are selling washing machines. It is needless to say that the farmers of this community are too intelligent and prosperous to be taken in by any wild-eyed scheme of a political nature and certainly if they want washing machines our enterprising merchants have plenty of them to sell. If, however, farmers are approached or pestered on any new proposition which they do not understand thoroughly, we urge them not to sign any papers or make any pledges or promises until after they have consulted with their banker or with the editor of this paper. Beware of gold-brick agents."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Gaston, *The Nonpartisan League*, 56-58.

<sup>44</sup>[James Frost], *Townley & Co. and the Nonpartisan League*, 31 (Beach, N. Dak., 1918). See also J. W. Brinton, *Wheat and Politics*, 36-37 (Minneapolis, 1931).

<sup>45</sup>O. M. Thomason, *The Beginning and the End of the Nonpartisan League*, 105-106 (1920).

The methods employed in organizing the League represented a curious blend of socialism and high-pressure salesmanship. Farmers were advised to do as "big business" did when it came to organizing for politics. League leaders pointed out that "big business" was "absolutely nonpartisan and well-financed; it operated politically through the dominant parties or in any other way that comes in handy." The case of Jay Gould was cited who, when asked what his politics were, replied: "In Democratic states I am a Democrat; in Republican states I am a Republican, but I am always for the Erie Railway."<sup>46</sup>

The League propaganda was "intended to shock and startle and stir up" both the reader and the listener and represented "the farmer as an upright and down-trodden member of society and Big Business as the villain."<sup>47</sup> Arguments were advanced to substantiate reasons why the farmers should control the political life of North Dakota. To a degree, they resembled those of the French physiocrats who strongly upheld the superiority of agriculture over other forms of economic activity. League leaders pointed to agriculture as the "basic" industry, "the most important industry under the shining sun. Emperors, Kings, Ministers, Presidents, Parliaments, Congresses, great generals, mighty armies with monster guns and forests of bayonets and mountains of shot and shell, are down on their knees before the man with the hoe. Yet, he has had but little direct voice in affairs of government that determine his weal or woe. Men who can hardly tell the difference between a cotton boll and a chrysanthemum, are expected to legislate for the most vital industry of all. . . ." The League demanded "proportional occupational representation" as a means of eliminating the imposter from public life. It was maintained that a representative of the farmers, representative of the views of that economic group, would be more apt to legislate in accordance with the needs of that group than one representing a variety of economic interests. It was not "sleek, smooth-tongued, bay-windowed fellows that looked well, talked well, lived well, lied well," that could best run the government. The case of the North Dakota farmers was but one instance of where "the farmers

<sup>46</sup>*Nonpartisan League Methods and Principles*, 10 (a booklet, Waco, Texas, n. d.).

<sup>47</sup>John M. Gillette, "The North Dakota Harvest of the Nonpartisan League," *Survey*, 41:759-760 (Mar. 1, 1919).



had been vainly begging a bunch of wind-jamming, poker-playing, booze-fighting politicians for legislation to protect them against the flour-mill trust and the grain gamblers. . . ." If the farmers of North Dakota constituted 83 percent of the population, they said, why should they not "control 83 percent of the government."<sup>48</sup>

Greater confidence was obtained among the farmers by limiting the organization to actual tillers of the soil and later by encouraging practical cooperation with organized labor. Office seekers were to be eliminated by nominating as candidates for public office a farmer, a wage earner, or anyone else "tried in the field of unselfish service." Campaign expenses were to be financed with fees that were high enough to cover the costs, the candidates in turn being tied to the farmer organization in the same manner that the candidate for big business was tied to the business interests.

That the actual administration of the League would be highly centralized was accepted as axiomatic almost from the very beginning. It was dominated by a committee of three that was democratic in form but despotic in practice.<sup>49</sup> Townley was chairman of the committee, the other two members being William Lemke and F. B. Wood. Tenure on this committee was indefinite as there was no provision for the election of successors. The opposition made much of this centralized control, but Townley's replies placated the rank and file, temporarily at least, and typified his ability to obtain their confidence. "Are not the milling interests organized and ably led by a few men?" asked Townley. "And the interests that manufacture agricultural machinery? And the railroads? Does anybody know of a single great interest in this country that is not highly organized?"<sup>50</sup>

The actual organizing of the farmers was one of the most dramatic aspects of the League, for it had gathered together one of the most artful groups of radical writers and speakers the Nation had ever seen. They were thoroughly saturated with radical doctrines, techniques of indoctrination, and large-scale organization methods. In the art of mass psychology they were unsurpassed.

<sup>48</sup>*Nonpartisan League Methods and Principles*, 14-15.

<sup>49</sup>*Nonpartisan League; Origin, Purpose and Method of Operation, War Program and Statement of Principles*. 10-11; James Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer*, 221 (Minneapolis, 1933).

<sup>50</sup>*Why Should Farmers Pay Dues?* 7 (a booklet, St. Paul, n.d.).

They were capable of finding the least common denominator among their farmer listeners; they adopted few themes, and they repeated them untiringly. Townley, in particular, was a man of striking physical appearance, boisterous in talk but rich in expression; and the League leaders in general were capable of pointing out the enemy to the farmers in simple fashion. In North Dakota the League encountered no difficulty in arousing the farmers against their traditional foes—the railroads, the financial interests, and the press. League leaders aptly fed the passions of the farmers by telling them exactly what they wanted to hear.

In contacting the farmers the League's organizers were instructed to ascertain the particular interests of the farmer and to talk about them instead of the goods, to agree with everything the farmer said, and to condemn everything he disliked. This approach is epitomized in the following account of Townley's instructions by a former League leader.

"Make the rubes pay their god-damn money to join and they'll stick—stick 'til hell freezes over." Organizers were drilled on how to "organize" the farmer in his barn yard; how to "surround the rube," one man in front and one on each side, facing him, and all urging him to join. . . . "Find out the damn fool's hobby," taught Townley, "and then talk it. If he likes religion, talk Jesus Christ; if he is against the government, damn the democrats; if he is afraid of whiskey, preach prohibition; if he wants to talk hogs, talk hogs—talk anything he'll listen to, but talk, talk, until you get his god-damn John Hancock to a check for six dollars."<sup>51</sup>

In short, the tricks of the accomplished salesman and the orator were put into full swing by an ably trained group of radicals advocating a Socialist program. Many of the grievances they aired were highly exaggerated no doubt, but they achieved the desired end of increasing membership. In many rural areas strong appeals were made to the antipathies of farmers against town merchants and business interests. Even national feeling and racial pride were used; organizers were instructed "to put a soft pedal on all the Wilson stuff" when organizing in German communities.<sup>52</sup> Mass meetings and large picnics were arranged to supplement the work of the organizers and sometimes to pave the way for them in new territory.

<sup>51</sup>Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer*, 219-220.

<sup>52</sup>Maxwell, *The Nonpartisan League from the Inside* 82-85.

Whether League organizers approached the farmer in his barn or whether they addressed him in public meetings, the expression "Go home and stop the hogs" was used with increasing effectiveness.

A potent factor in the early successes of the League was the Nonpartisan League press which, according to one writer, furnished "a significant case study in the use of propaganda by a highly class-conscious pressure group." Nowhere within the organization, with the possible exception of the speaker's platform, were the gifts of expression better demonstrated than in the columns of the League press.<sup>53</sup> League writers warned the members not to trust the existing press; they were skilled in the techniques of indoctrination, and "with astute realism they anticipate[d] a wave of opposition from newspapers within and without the state..." Charles Edward Russell, the noted Socialist publicist and editor of the *Nonpartisan Leader*, the official organ, warned against "tainted news," "poisonous news," and the "poisoned special article." An early issue of the *Nonpartisan Leader* cautioned: "The greatest advantage the interests and corporations have is their control over the press. That is where the first great danger lies before your organization. Beware of it; it is the greatest power in the world, the most subtle, insidious, poisonous, the hardest to detect and the hardest to defeat."<sup>54</sup> When the opposition press unleashed its attack upon the League, the skill and ingenuity of its journalists were well demonstrated in the retaliatory tactics. Little time was lost in portraying big business as the mortal enemy of the farmer in both cartoons and articles.<sup>55</sup> Feature articles were written in praise of government ownership, particularly in Australia and New Zealand. Editorials were written simply; they were graphic and presented to attract attention. Cartoons generally carried the point across.<sup>56</sup>

The organization work was in high gear by the close of 1915, and it is estimated that the League conducted five to six hundred meetings during

<sup>53</sup>Joseph H. Mader, "The North Dakota Press and the Nonpartisan League," *Journalism Quarterly*, 14:321-323 (December 1937).

<sup>54</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 1(1):7, (5):4 (Sept. 23, Oct. 21, 1915).

<sup>55</sup>F. A. Teigen, *The Nonpartisan League*, 45 (St. Paul, 1918).

<sup>56</sup>Gillette, "The North Dakota Harvest of the Nonpartisan League," 759-760.

the winter of 1915-16. By February 1917 some 30,000 members were said to have been enrolled, and about three-fourths of the State was organized.<sup>57</sup> Shortly after the organization work of 1915, preparations were made for the 1916 election by calling precinct meetings to assemble on February 22, 1916 and elect delegates to a state convention.<sup>58</sup> These meetings were to be held at the regular polling places in each precinct, unless other arrangements already had been made. Parallels were drawn between the acts of the North Dakota farmers of February 1916 and the American Revolution of 1776. "The conditions under which the people... in 1776 suffered... are only unlike in degree to the present conditions which the farmers are suffering in North Dakota."<sup>59</sup>

The meetings were well-attended in each of the 2,000 precincts of North Dakota, and delegates were elected to legislative and district conventions.<sup>60</sup> The district conventions nominated candidates for both houses of the legislature and delegates to a state convention which met at Fargo on March 29 and 30. The League candidates were as follows: for governor, Lynn J. Frazier of Hoople, graduate of the University of North Dakota, to run in the Republican primary; for lieutenant-governor, Albert Stenmo of Merrifield, Grand Forks County, graduate of the University of North Dakota, to run in the Republican primary; for secretary of state, Thomas Hall, the incumbent, to run as a Republican; for auditor, Carl R. Kositsky of Bismarck, secretary of the State tax commission and a Burleigh County commissioner, to run as a Republican; for treasurer, P. M. Casey, vice president of the North Dakota Society of Equity, to run as a Democrat; for attorney-general, William A. Langer of Mandan, State attorney for Morton County, to run as a Republican; for superintendent of public instruction, N. C. MacDonald of Valley City, graduate of the University of North Dakota and State inspector of consolidated schools, to run on the nonpartisan school ballot; for commissioner of insurance, S. A. Olsness, a farmer at Cheyenne in Eddy County, to run as a Republican; for commissioner of agriculture, John Hagan of Deering in McHenry County, a graduate of Valparaiso

<sup>57</sup>*Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917).

<sup>58</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(4):5 (Jan. 27, 1916).

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 2(6):6 (Feb. 10, 1916).

<sup>60</sup>*Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917); *Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(9):3 (Mar. 2, 1916).

University in Indiana, town supervisor for eleven years, and a farmer, running on the Republican ticket; for railroad commissioners, Charles Bleick of Elgin, Morton County, an active Equity and Farmers' Union man and graduate of the Nebraska College of Agriculture, M. P. Johnson of Tolley, Renville County, president of the North Dakota Society of Equity, and Sam Aandal, a Litchville, Barnes County farmer—all three running on the Republican ticket; for judges of the supreme court—Luther Birdzell, former State tax commissioner and professor of law in the University of North Dakota, J. E. Robinson, a Fargo lawyer, and R. H. Grace, lawyer from Mohall—all three running on the nonpartisan ballot in the primaries.<sup>61</sup>

As announced, League officials and organizers were not permitted to accept a nomination for State office, the theory being that the office should seek the man and not the man the office.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, only farmer members had seats in the convention in which candidates were endorsed ranging from representatives in the legislature to governor. County politics were of no concern to the League. The nomination of Lynn Frazier for governor represented an ingenious piece of politics for, according to his sponsors, he was "a plain farmer, with no political record which they could misrepresent."<sup>63</sup>

At the time of his nomination Frazier was forty-one years old. He was a native American and a farmer—"not an imitation farmer nor a town farmer, either." He was farming the farmstead his father had been farming since 1881. Frazier, like Townley, was born in Minnesota, his parents moving to Pembina County, Dakota Territory, in 1881. There the father built a sod house, and when Frazier graduated from high school at the age of seventeen he and his brother took up the task of running the farm, their father having died the previous year. Having developed an ambition to become a professional man, Frazier taught school for two years and saved money to enter the Mayville Normal School. He completed his course in one year, graduating in 1895 with the school's first class. After teaching school for another two years, Frazier entered the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks. There he displayed qualities as a student and an

athlete, his main sport being football. Frazier was the "square blocky type, ideal for a center in those days of driving line rushes." He was football captain for two years and graduated in 1901 with a good scholastic record and "all the honors" his classmates could bestow upon him. Meanwhile, the brother in charge of the family farm had died, and consequently Frazier had to give up all ideas of a profession and return to the "prosaic work of being a farmer."<sup>64</sup>

If Townley and Lemke were unaware of the wisdom of their choice of Frazier as the "political pontiff" of the League, they were soon convinced of it. Frazier, upon his nomination, was immediately labelled the "modern Cincinnatus" who was "called from the plow to head his people and to govern a great commonwealth."<sup>65</sup> He was "blessed by the substantial figure and confident pose of a statesman. He looked like a bishop. But Farmer Frazier was at that time untrained and inexperienced as a public speaker." Townley and Lemke then assigned him the job of meeting the farmers and selling himself with his "whole someness and unassumed solidity." Public meetings were widely advertised and usually held out of doors. Farmers drove miles to hear him. "He stood before them, sunburned and baldheaded. His voice was firm and persuasive. He spoke briefly and the tired farmers loved him."<sup>66</sup>

League leaders emphasized the need for victory in the primary election by painting lurid pictures of the consequences that would follow the defeat of League candidates. Townley said:

If the farmers and their friends lose . . . North Dakota will be drained to the limit of her ability to pay. Homesteads will be mortgaged and lost. As in the past, horses, machinery and household goods will be sold under the hammer and the tillers of the soil will be turned out of their homes. Merchants will go broke because the farmers can not pay their store bill. Heavy mortgages, high interest, low prices, will force long hours of toil. Wives, mothers and sisters will work in the field. Children will be kept out of school summers to plow, seed and harvest, and kept at home winters for lack of money to pay the way through high school or college. All will be debt and drudgery. Mothers and fathers will die from overwork and worry while yet they should be young.

Meanwhile we will yield up tens of millions of the earnings of our wives and daughters and mothers and

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 2(14):3 (Apr. 6, 1916).

<sup>62</sup>*Nonpartisan League Methods and Principles*, 12.

<sup>63</sup>*Where the People Rule*, 6 (a pamphlet, n.p., n.d.).

<sup>64</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(14):3, 5, 6 (Apr. 6, 1916).

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 2(17):7 (Apr. 27, 1916).

<sup>66</sup>*Manahan, Trials of a Lawyer*, 221-222.



fathers and brothers to the greedy masters of trade and finance in the East—millions that they do not need and can not use—millions that should be spent in North Dakota to make happy and prosperous a great people in a great state—millions that should be spent by North Dakota farmers with North Dakota business men to the greater advantage of both.

All this—as in the past—IF WE LOSE.<sup>67</sup>

Frazier, despite his lack of political experience, displayed all the earmarks of one willing to learn; furthermore, there was something appealing about his inexperienced campaigning. "Publicspeaking like this is out of my line, I must admit," he said. "I am not a politician, but I can milk and slop hogs and fill the bill on the farm."<sup>68</sup> When told that "I was chosen to lead the farmers' ticket to victory, I thought they had made a mistake." This approach appealed to the farmers, and the *Nonpartisan Leader* made much capital of the fact that his speeches were "unadorned with flourishes."

A novelty of the campaign that caused the experienced politicians to "gasp with amazement" was the chartering of a special train, the "Frazier Special." This type of campaigning was not, however, the invention of the Nonpartisan League. In 1908 the Socialist presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, was carried to all parts of the country in the "Red Special."<sup>69</sup> The chances are that the League leaders borrowed this idea from the Socialist Party, whence many of them had come. The Frazier Special was scheduled to stop at all important points in North Dakota during the last week of the campaign, closing June 28, primary day.<sup>70</sup> It carried the League candidates, and it was intended to give the farmers a chance to hear the case of the farmers. A series of picnics were arranged with five, ten, and fifteen-minute speeches by the candidate for governor and his party. An opportunity was also given the prospective voters to board the Frazier Special and ride from their home station to the nearest mass meeting by simply purchasing a ticket. Business offices, stores, and shops were closed in honor of the occasion in some towns,

including New Rockford, Jamestown, Valley City, Bottineau, and Minot.<sup>71</sup>

Frazier, running true to form, defeated four candidates in the primaries and received a larger vote than the opposition candidates combined.<sup>72</sup> In fact, the League "swirled" into the campaign and "tore it wide open." All its candidates were nominated on the Republican ticket with the exception of P. M. Casey, its choice for treasurer "whom the Democrats obligingly nominated."<sup>73</sup> A Mandan newspaper, upon hearing of the nomination of Frazier, asked: "Who in Hell is Frazier, and Where in Hell is Hoople?"<sup>74</sup> As a result of the League showing, both the Republican and Democratic parties adopted programs largely in accord with the League platform.<sup>75</sup>

Originally, the League had announced that it would only support candidates for the State executive, judiciary, and legislative offices, but it diverted sufficiently to support Porter McCumber for re-election to the United States Senate. Officially, the League endorsed no candidates for county offices and for the presidency; secretly the organization was said to have endorsed Woodrow Wilson. Lynn Frazier was said to have been for Charles Evans Hughes.<sup>76</sup>

In the November election the League again achieved a thunderous victory by capturing "every elective State office except one" and electing three justices to the Supreme Court who had endorsed the League program for state-owned utilities.<sup>77</sup> Of the 107,000 votes cast, Frazier received 87,000 or 80 percent.<sup>78</sup> The farmers, however, forgot to "remember Casey," the League candidate for treasurer who ran on the Democratic ticket. The League gained control of every branch of the government except the Senate, the majority in the House being 85 percent. North Dakota presented the anomalous situation of having elected a Republican governor over the Democratic candidate by a vote of four to one and a Republican Senator over a Democrat by an overwhelming majority and yet having

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 3(1):5 (July 6, 1916).

<sup>72</sup>Brinton, *Wheat and Politics*, 37.

<sup>73</sup>*Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917).

<sup>74</sup>Brinton, *Wheat and Politics*, 37.

<sup>75</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 3(22):5 (Nov. 30, 1916).

<sup>76</sup>*The New International Year Book*, 1916, 496 (New York, 1917); *Nonpartisan Leader* 3(18):8 (Nov. 2, 1916).

<sup>77</sup>*Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917).

<sup>78</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(3):7 (Jan. 18, 1917).

<sup>67</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(22):1 (June 1, 1916).

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 2(15):16 (Apr. 13, 1916).

<sup>69</sup>Haynes, *Social Politics in the United States*, 196-197; McAlister Coleman, *Eugene V. Debs*, 244-248 (New York, 1930); David Karsner, *Debs*, 190-191 (New York, 1919).

<sup>70</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(24):8 (June 15, 1916).



given the Democratic presidential candidate a safe majority.<sup>79</sup>

The post-election comments were amusing. Nonpartisan leaders pronounced the results as the beginning of "a peaceful revolution" that had "found its place of incubation in the Northwest states."<sup>80</sup> One correspondent pointed out that "ten months ago Governor Frazier was unknown outside of his own precinct," and another queried whether "slopping hogs is the right sort of training for anyone charged with the grave duties of the state's chief executive." The wonder of the election was that the League "dipped into its first political campaign," before it was a year old; "even more astonishing" were the results when one considers North Dakota's "'magnificent distances.'" Well over 80 percent of its population was scattered on farms that could be reached for the most part only by a personal canvass.<sup>81</sup>

League leaders had hopes of encouraging a migration of farmers to North Dakota, largely because of the legislative program that they expected to place in operation, but the opposition which was regaining its balance was doing everything to prevent the realization of such expectations.<sup>82</sup> Arguments used both in defending and in attacking the League were immersed in personal animus, lost tempers, and heated words. The cry of socialism was, by far, the most popular charge against the organization, the attack being led by Jerry Bacon, an implacable foe of the League, and his *Grand Forks Herald*.<sup>83</sup> Local bankers in all probability were encouraged by the large financial institutions upon which they were dependent to resist the League. Opposition leaders feared that the success of the League program would jeopardize property values and the credit structure of the State. They claimed that North Dakota mortgages and other securities that previously had been easy to sell would become a drug on the market.<sup>84</sup> The *Minneapolis Journal* asserted: "'Capital won't invest,' 'men with money are afraid,' 'confidence is shaken'..."<sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 3(20):3 (Nov. 16, 1916); *Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917); *The New International Year Book*, 1916, 496.

<sup>80</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(8):3 (Feb. 22, 1917).

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(1):2 (Jan. 4, 1917); *Literary Digest*, 54:115 (Jan. 20, 1917).

<sup>82</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 3(21):16, (22):16 (Nov. 23, 30, 1916).

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(8):4 (Feb. 22, 1917).

<sup>84</sup>Bacon, *A Warning to the Farmer*, 7.

<sup>85</sup>Quoted in *Nonpartisan Leader*, 3(4):11 (July 27, 1916).

There was no question that past profits and privileges were imperiled. Local merchants largely through the pressure of wholesalers, jobbers, and manufacturers, and owing to a personal fear for their business future, also attacked the League violently. Business interests in general saw in the League program the possible creation of machinery for the manufacturing of state-owned products in state-owned mills, packing houses, and factories and the eventual establishment of state-owned stores that threatened their very existence.<sup>86</sup>

Besides lining up the business interests of North Dakota against the League, the political and economic theories of the movement were assailed. At times the opposition claimed that it was not opposed to the movement, but only to its leader and candidates.<sup>87</sup> What became of the money the League collected was a question that was frequently asked by its adversaries.<sup>88</sup> Nonpartisan leaders were assailed as "red Socialists," "expert hypnotists," "gold brick vendors," "world revolutionaries," atheists, I.W.W.s, dynamite free lovers, carpetbaggers, home wreckers, Hun traitors, noisemakers, theorists, dilettantes, dreamers, "beautiful phrasemakers," "swivel chair reformers," "mild-eyed poets," "sweet mouthed flatterers," mountebanks, confidence men, anarchists, charlatans, agitators, and visionaries.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup>Teigen, *The Nonpartisan League*, 44-45. The *Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(8):6 (Feb. 24, 1916), said that the farmers and businessmen had many things in common and that their interests were identical. "But many business men have got themselves in bad with the farmer because in matters political, in matters relative to high interest rates, railroad robbery and grain gambling, they have been only half-heartedly with the farmer, if with him at all. Indeed, many of them align themselves with the political tricksters, and the schemers who prey upon the farmer."

<sup>87</sup>Bacon, *A Warning to the Farmer*, 25.

<sup>88</sup>Thomason, *The Beginning and the End of the Nonpartisan League*, 185; Charles Merz, "The Nonpartisan League," *New Republic*, 22:333-338 (May 12, 1920); Maxwell, *The Nonpartisan League from the Inside*, 58, 62, 71; Gillette, "The North Dakota Harvest of the Nonpartisan League," 755.

<sup>89</sup>Independent Voters Association, *Townleyism's Future in North Dakota*, 7, 12 (Fargo, 1919), and *Voter's Guide*, 6 (Fargo, 1920); *Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(6):11 (Feb. 8, 1917); Maxwell, *The Nonpartisan League from the Inside*, 58; *Daily Journal Press* (St. Cloud, Minn.), Oct. 11, 1919; Thomason, *The Beginning and the End of the Nonpartisan League*, 113, 185, 192, 200; *Trade Unionism and Townleyism* (a leaflet, n.d.).

The charge was advanced that North Dakota would become an "agrarian dictatorship." It was claimed that the League was a "virulent infection . . . carrying death dealing germs into the vitals of our state. . . . With progress stopped industrial and commercial stagnation will ensue and the human family will deteriorate like angle worms in a tin can with too little dirt to cover or feed them." It was also charged that the program would make North Dakota a "mecca for Ne'er-Do-Wells" and thus open its doors to the "thriftless," "shiftless," and criminals.<sup>90</sup> Had the opposition charged that the League was "an institution in which the few decide and the many follow," it would have made a more pointed criticism.<sup>91</sup>

The first real test of opposition to the League program was destined to come from the North Dakota Senate. Of the total of 49 Senators, 24 were hold-overs from the previous session; and of the 24 newly elected, 18 were endorsed by the League, 14 being Republicans and 4 Democrats. In the lower house the strength of the League was impressive, 81 being elected by the League and 32 by the opposition.<sup>92</sup>

Frazier, in his inaugural address, besides recommending the adoption of the League's industrial program, advocated reduction of the legal interest rate, minimum wages for workmen, better roads, civil service for state employees, development of the local coal beds, better rural schools, state aid for rural education, and a nonpartisan ballot.<sup>93</sup> Most of the bills embodying these proposals were freely discussed in League caucuses held nightly at the Northwestern Hotel, and the men who were best qualified to introduce the bills in the legislature were selected. The legal committee of the League assisted in framing the bills.<sup>94</sup>

The first major task was to amend the constitution in order to provide a legal basis for state-owned utilities and their financing. The issuance of bonds for such purposes was blocked by the constitution.<sup>95</sup> Several procedures were open

for constitutional changes. The 1917 legislature could have submitted proposed amendments to the 1919 legislature which, if passed, would then go to the people for a referendum vote. The main objection to this method was that it would take three or four years. The legislature could also have called a constitutional convention, an expensive process, to frame a new constitution and then submit it to the people for approval. A third means was the submission of a constitution by the legislature, or by a representative body elected to do so by the legislature, to the people to accept or reject. This last method called for only one election. Since the constitution was silent on the matter of procedure, it remained for the legislature to determine the best and most efficient means.

The hostility of the Senate to any constitutional changes was shown immediately. Few League supporters were given important committee assignments. Of the 40 committees appointed, the League held the majority in only 6, an arrangement that was totally out of proportion to the actual strength of the League in the Senate.<sup>96</sup> The major committees, including those concerned with banks and banking, education, insurance, the judiciary, livestock, public lands, railroads, rules, taxes and tax laws, and ways and means were packed with hold-over Senators.

A new constitution was embodied in House Bill 44, called the farmers' bill of rights, and a special election was "to give the voters an opportunity to pass upon a modernized code of government."<sup>97</sup> The provisions of the constitution were far-reaching and included authorizations other than those permitting state-owned utilities, state hail insurance, and the exemption of farm improvements from taxation.<sup>98</sup> Among other things, the proposed constitution included the following provisions: state-wide prohibition; the election of state and county officers every four instead of two years in order to economize and also to prevent state issues from being influenced by national affairs; the short ballot, permitting the election of the governor and one or two other executive

greatest granary of the country was ever suspected. The state was like a man trying to get around in a suit of clothes made for him when he was a boy." Charles Edward Russell, *In and Out of the Yoke*, 28 (n.p., n.d.).

<sup>90</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(2):10 (Jan. 11, 1917).

<sup>91</sup>Charles Merz, "Political Revolt in the Northwest," *New Republic*, 13:44-45 (Nov. 10, 1917).

<sup>92</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(3):5, 20 (Jan. 18, 1917).

<sup>93</sup>Independent Voters Association, *Voters' Guide*, 5, 9, 11.

<sup>94</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 2(10):2 (Mar. 9, 1916).

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, 3(22):5, 12 (Nov. 30, 1916).

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(2):5 (Jan. 11, 1917).

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(3):9 (Jan. 18, 1917).

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(2):7 (Jan. 11, 1917). A typical League explanation for the constitutional amendment was the following: "It was adopted when North Dakota was a frontier settlement and long before its position as the

officers, the rest to be appointed by the legislature; the meeting of the legislature every two years so that there would be no hold-over Senators; the investment of state funds within the commonwealth in order to make possible extensive loans to farmers at reasonable interest rates; an increase in the bonded debt limit of the State to \$500,000 to permit the construction of state-owned projects; a four-fifths vote by the Supreme Court to declare laws unconstitutional; petitions for the recall of public officials to require the signature of 10 percent of the voters; and the adoption of the Torrens system of land registration, "one of the up-to-date things in government."<sup>99</sup>

It was no secret that the defeat of House Bill 44 would be considered a mortal blow to the League for it embodied the chief features of the industrial program. As expected, the opposition to the bill was strong. It was assailed as unconstitutional, socialistic, "sudden, revolutionary, unprecedented"; it was charged that its enactment would encourage irresponsible people to seize office, go on a wild spending orgy, and plunge the State into debt.

When the strength of the opposition was felt, Townley decided to carry the fight directly to the farmers at scheduled meetings, addressing them in a conversational tone, and in many instances appealing to them by name.<sup>100</sup> He asserted: "There is nothing in the federal constitution that forbids it, nothing in the state constitution and nothing in your constitution, I am sure. I'll tell you whose constitution it doesn't agree with. It doesn't agree with the constitution of those who have been making this extra dollar a bushel profit out of Feed D wheat. . . . They talk about a debt limit to protect you. There is no limit now to the ability of the trusts to put you into debt. I am for a debt limit. Sure! I am for a limit to the power of the plunderbund to rob you."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(3):5 (Jan. 18, 1917). There was already precedent for the establishment of state-owned enterprises in North Dakota. State bonds previously had been issued to build and equip the State bindery plant. In fifteen years, according to League officials, the principal and interest was paid out of the net earnings. A tax was not levied to pay for the plant which was paid for in fifteen years. Furthermore, North Dakota farmers were said to have been saved about a cent on each pound of twine. *Ibid.*, 4(4):5 (Jan. 25, 1917).

<sup>100</sup>Bacon, *A Warning to the Farmer*, 19; *Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(4):8 (Jan. 25, 1917).

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(5):20 (Feb. 1, 1917).

In the House the opposition against the bill was led by A. G. Divet, who lost no time in informing League leaders who had challenged him to a debate that he would not humiliate himself by debating the bill with "an anarchist, discredited socialist, or I.W.W. worker, with which you are so richly endowed, seeking only an occasion to rant about his own particular grievances against God and society." John Baer, the League cartoonist, meanwhile had been caricaturing Divet as the "shepherd of the people" with "cramps—in the head" and as a "lackey for big interests."<sup>102</sup>

House Bill 44 was passed by the House on January 26, after five days of "Invective, cajolery, and constitutional arguments. . . ." League leaders charged the bill was opposed by lawyers, not farmers, who engaged in dilatory tactics by repeating trivial motions, by demanding roll calls on trifling matters, and by offering amendments they knew would be voted down. In the final vote the bill was passed 81 to 28, with 4 not voting; 6 legislators not endorsed by the League voted for it, and 5 endorsed voted against it.<sup>103</sup>

It was not until House Bill 44 reached the Senate that it encountered real opposition. Senate antipathy to the measure was displayed early in the session when an outright repudiation of its features was demanded, but suddenly the tactics of the opposition were revised with the introduction of a bill providing for constitutional changes by the method that necessitated a special election to be followed by two regular elections. This was the procedure the League had sought to avoid because of the delays involved. The change in opposition tactics was intended to serve a twofold purpose. The opponents, sensing the popularity of the League's program with the farmers, could say that they were for it but not the League's leaders; and by postponing enactment of the bill, it was hoped that the ardor for the measures would pass after the first flush of enthusiasm. The League repeatedly urged the farmers to exert pressure on Senators known to be against House Bill 44, but despite League efforts the upper house succeeded in postponing action indefinitely by a vote of 29 to 20. One Senator endorsed by the League voted for the delay, while two not endorsed by the League voted against it.

Some League members accepted the defeat of House Bill 44 as "a piece of luck," for had it passed

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(6):10, (7):5 (Feb. 8, 15, 1917).

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(5):5, 7 (Feb. 1, 1917).



some members "might have expected the immediate arrival of the farmers' millenium." The failure of the new constitution afforded the Nonpartisan Leaguers a breathing spell, an opportunity to warn their followers not to expect too much, and a chance to get the new constitution adopted by a petition to the people.<sup>104</sup>

Other proposals introduced in the 1917 legislature included the following: repeal of the "Better Farming Law" and distribution of the accumulated funds; compulsory notification of mortgagors before foreclosure; permission to subpoena witnesses by telephone, telegraph, or mail; uniform interest rates before and after maturity and all contracts to the contrary to be null and void; authorization of a tax levy on land for creating a hail insurance fund; a scaling down of the legal rate of interest for any indebtedness; setting aside the third Friday in January as "state temperance day" to be observed in public schools; compelling farmers to rotate their crops; limited woman suffrage; and a call for a constitutional convention. There was a series of bills providing for "an evening up of opportunities between country and town," and others provided for the construction of a \$200,000 terminal elevator wherever the Equity Cooperative Exchange wanted it built and its subsequent transference by sale to the Equity. Still another bill required physicians and surgeons to keep posted prominently a list of all their charges and fees, and surgeons who removed appendixes, tapeworms, or the like, were to send the removed parts to the medical school of the University of North Dakota which, in turn, would forward a certified report to the patient that would aid him in auditing his doctor bills.

A bill termed the "Old Gang" elevator bill calling for a \$300,000 appropriation to be raised by direct taxation was vetoed by Governor Frazier who described it as "a fake bill," the purpose of which was to discredit state ownership and defeat the farmers' purposes.<sup>105</sup> The objections to this bill were particularly strong because it provided for one small elevator; its taxing features would have been a burden to the State; it would not have been re-enforced with a flour mill or any other state-controlled marketing unit; and furthermore, it would not prove of any substantial service to the grain producers, and finally it would give the enemies of the League an opportunity to declare state ownership a failure.

The important Board of Regents bill, known as House Bill 65, called for the abolition of the existing board and the establishment of a new one. It was strictly a League bill which, according to the League, was in line with the purpose of placing the agricultural college in the hands of a board that was friendly to the farmer. The League was particularly grieved against the old board because of the investigations that had resulted in the dismissal of Dr. John Worst from the presidency of the college of agriculture.<sup>106</sup> Besides eliminating the commissioner's salary, League leaders claimed that it would have brought about unity in the state administration of education by leaving the superintendent of public instruction as head of the entire system. The League charged that Governor Hanna had appointed the board on March 2, 1915, two days before there was any law providing for the establishment of such a body. In the course of this controversy the members of the Board of Regents refused to relinquish their posts, and their actions were upheld by the Senate which defeated the bill by a vote of 26 to 17. Another measure, House Bill 174, provided for the transfer of the farmers' institutes from the control of the agricultural college to the commission, with special instructions to deal with the marketing of farm products.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the failure of the League to obtain passage of House Bill 44, the League was successful in fulfilling some of its campaign pledges. The newly created office of state inspector of grains, weights, and measures was empowered with authority to regulate the weighing and grading of grain. Farm improvements were partially exempt from taxation by the enactment of a law permitting such improvements to be assessed at 5 percent of their true valuation, while the property of banks, railroads, and "the lesser agents of Big Business" was assessed at thirty per cent of its actual value." Another act prevented railroads from discriminating against cooperative elevators when it came to supplying them with cars, while still another act placed a "new cooperative corporation law" in operation. Limited woman suffrage was granted; a public welfare commission was organized to look into the conditions of woman and child labor; evening schools were established for adults; the inheritance tax on large fortunes was raised

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(4):11, (6):22 (Jan. 25, Feb. 8, 1917). The office of commissioner of education was created by the 1915 legislature.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 4(10):8 (Mar. 8, 1917).

<sup>104</sup>Merz, "Political Revolt in the Northwest," 45.

<sup>105</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(10):5 (Mar. 8, 1917).



to 15 percent; and the compulsory school age was raised to seventeen.<sup>108</sup>

League claims in the field of education were particularly noteworthy. When the League came into power in 1916, it was said that only 1 farm child of every 4 finished the eighth grade and only 1 of every 10 enrolled in high school. The average attendance was 65 days, the average rural school year being 150 days long. City schools had a term of 180 days and a 90-percent attendance.<sup>109</sup>

Since the new superintendent of public instruction was a League man it was quite natural that changes would be made. One complaint against the old course of study was that nowhere was the word "dockage" used. Being a common word in the grain business, the new superintendent placed it in the new course of study along with such words as "music and calisthenics." Studies of farm accounts and public ownership were introduced in the seventh grade. The eighth-grade teacher, among other things, had to have an appreciation of "the benefits of eliminating all unnecessary middlemen and selling in the open market." There also were numerous other curriculum needs required in "making farm children into militant economists."

Higher requirements were demanded of new teachers. Legislation made possible an easier access to medical inspection for rural schools; free transportation was provided for children living more than 2½ miles from school. If the child had not graduated from the eighth grade, he was compelled to go to school until he was seventeen; likewise, schooling opportunities were provided for adults. Rural schools were standardized and consolidated, it being claimed that "more than a hundred consolidated schools" were added to the state list during the ten months the League was in control. As expected a friendly legislature also provided more money for rural education.

Besides passing some 254 laws in the legislative session of 1917, the League also showed definite proof that it was after the support of labor. League members introduced bills that were asked for and endorsed by the North Dakota Federation of Labor. A number of minor bills were passed, but major measures, such as bills for workingmen's

<sup>108</sup>Merz, "Political Revolt in the Northwest," 45; Gillette, "The North Dakota Harvest of the Nonpartisan League," 758.

<sup>109</sup>Merz, "Political Revolt in the Northwest," 71-72.

compensation and minimum wages and hours for women and children, were defeated.<sup>110</sup>

The year 1917 witnessed the first serious attempt on the part of the Nonpartisan League to grow nationally, particularly by expanding into Minnesota, "the gateway of finance and business to the Northwest."<sup>111</sup> Organization work began in Minnesota early in 1917 when "a battalion of automobiles" used in organizing North Dakota were placed at the disposal of the Minnesota organizers. Between eighty and ninety cars, each equipped with trained organizers and supervised by experienced superintendents, were placed under the supervision of an executive committee of five farmers from five counties. By March 1917 the League claimed 12,000 members in Minnesota, but hardly had the League started its activities there when a rival "Nonpartisan League of Minnesota" was organized by five men representing wealthy lumbermen and merchants of Minneapolis and St. Paul.<sup>112</sup>

The legitimate League invaded Minnesota by publishing a pamphlet, *Facts for the Farmer*, the purpose being to reveal to Minnesota farmers how they were being robbed by the "land grabs" of corporations, the unequal system of taxation, elevator men, millers, "grain gamblers," and "manipulators of the butter and egg markets and unconscionable meat packers." The pamphlet also charged that government in Minnesota was a one-sided affair. Of the 67 members in the Senate in 1917, only 9 were farmers; and of the 130 members in the lower house only 38 were farmers. It asserted that the business, financial, and professional groups comprised only one-tenth

<sup>110</sup>*Nonpartisan League Methods and Principles*, 20; *Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(10):23 (Mar. 8, 1917).

<sup>111</sup>A. K. Horwill, "The Nonpartisan League," *New Republic*, 18:304 (Apr. 5, 1919). See also Ray McKaig, "The New Minnesota Despotism," *Public*, 21:465-467 (Apr. 13, 1918).

<sup>112</sup>William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 3:554 (St. Paul, 1926). The rival League issued a paper, the *Nonpartisan*, beginning in August, but it survived only until December. It expressed sympathy for the plight of the farmer but attacked Townley as the exponent of Socialism. The "fake" League published two large issues of a paper called *On The Square*, distributing large numbers at a cost of \$50,000. Some 50,000 copies of another pamphlet, *America First*, were circulated, as were tons of other anti-League literature. The "fake" League, it was claimed, spent about \$50,000.

of the population of the State but held three-fourths of the legislative seats and all major State offices. On the other hand, the combined population of farmers and workers comprising nine-tenths of the population held but one-fourth of the legislative seats and no State offices.<sup>113</sup> A second pamphlet, *Facts Kept from the Farmer*, appeared in September and attempted to show that "the huge investments of the big financial and corporate interest for political campaigns and the insidious efforts of such combinations to deceive the people by means of 'good will campaigns.'" Wide circulation was given these pamphlets through the mails.

Many League leaders, especially those in Minnesota, were of the opinion that the organization could grow nationally only with the aid of organized labor and consequently a determined bid was made for its support. While it was true that a fusion of agrarian and laboring forces was brought about, the growth of the League there was due primarily to the predominant agricultural population of the State. In Minnesota where there were three large cities—Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth—and the vote of agriculture and labor was more evenly distributed, the situation was more typical of that of other States. Cooperation between agriculture and labor at the ballot box was essential if the League was to grow nationally.

The proposed alignment of agriculture and labor threw a scare into the camps of the Republican and Democratic parties, but the entrance of the United States into the war and the radical doctrines propagated by the League leaders gave the opposition its much desired opportunity. League theories made it almost impossible for the League to avoid criticizing certain aspects of the policies of the Federal Government. League leaders, for example, had objected to the manner in which the Nation was organizing for war. "It was natural that an emergency structure should build, not around the isolated farmer, but around the industrial captain whose leadership is almost the only sort that exists locally, around the grain-buyer, the banker, the miller in whom the farmer saw his economic and political opponents, more to be feared than any distant autocracy. A grain-buyer, suspected of using a short scale, declares that this is a war for universal participa-

tion in the world's good things. . . . Liberty bonds have not the best chance of being taken quickly when their salesman is a local banker suspected of having done his best to block the enactment of a state rural credits law."<sup>114</sup> The charges of Townley typified the attitude of the League toward the war; he described it as "a rich man's war" and informed those who were sending their boys across the water that they "must pay the steel trust added, ever-increasing millions of profit to keep your boy from being destroyed after he gets over there."<sup>115</sup>

Added reason for attacking the League was supplied by the conference of producers and consumers which it held in St. Paul in September 1917. The League called this conference primarily to enlist the support of labor. Among the speakers was Senator Robert M. La Follette whose subject "The People's Fight," was intended as an appeal for reduced living costs. He had promised not to say anything disloyal, but after his speech got under way he became bolder and bolder, and among other things lamented "the decline of truly representative government" and other "things" which Townley later said "we didn't invite him there to discuss." La Follette charged that America's declaration of war had been unnecessary and demanded that the present generation pay the cost of the war not by the sale of bonds but by taxation. He also accused the wealthy who controlled the government with tabling "the proposition to tax wealth. . . ."<sup>116</sup>

Although the pronouncements of La Follette and the subsequent repercussions of his speech overshadowed the purpose of the meeting, the implications of the proposed alignment were not to be minimized for it moved a step closer to the organization of the farmer-labor party that was in the process of formation. The conference favored price fixing "so that the rich speculator and the powerful trust may be compelled to bow to the same level rule as the toiling farmer and wage-worker", emphasizing the point that if the profits in articles of daily consumption cannot be passed on to the consumer the Food Administra-

<sup>114</sup>"The Farmer and the War," *New Republic*, 13:8-9 (Nov. 3, 1917).

<sup>115</sup>Franklin F. Holbrook and Livia Appel, *Minnesota in the War with Germany*, 2:45 (St. Paul, 1932).

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:46-47. See also *Report of Minnesota Commission of Public Safety* (n.p., n.d.), for the commission's action against the League pursuant to La Follette's remarks.

<sup>113</sup>*Facts for the Farmer*, 132-133 (Minnesota Handbook, 1917).

tion should "seize and operate storage elevators, flour mills, bakeries, cereal and breadstuffs factories for the benefit of the people." Representatives from ten State federations of labor were present at this conference of producers and consumers, the total number of union men represented being between 1,500 and 2,000.<sup>117</sup>

Townley was not slow in pointing out the political possibilities of such an alliance. "The farmers control 35 per cent of the vote of this country; labor controls about 27 per cent; a combination of these two elements would make itself felt throughout the nation."<sup>118</sup> At times the relations between the two groups were close. State federations of labor in North Dakota, Minnesota, Idaho, Wisconsin, and other States endorsed the League. Later when the North Dakota industrial program was launched, the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Minneapolis Trades and Council Assembly voted to deposit their funds with the Bank of North Dakota.<sup>119</sup>

In the beginning the Nonpartisan League had attempted to capitalize on the differences existing between town and country. Consequently the opposition among city people was not surprising for they found themselves excluded from the organization. They felt that the League as a political power would benefit the farmer at their expense. Limiting the organization to farmers was a strong point in the beginning, but as time elapsed it became a source of weakness.<sup>120</sup>

The outcome of the conference of producers and consumers in St. Paul was exactly the opportunity the opposition was waiting for, and it was the signal for a general assault against the League, especially in Minnesota. Storms of protest arose. Both La Follette and the League were charged with pro-Germanism, treachery, partnership with the Kaiser, and the other crimes against the country. La Follette was threatened with a trial and expulsion from the United States Senate. Among the most vigorous opponents of the League was the Minnesota Public Safety Commission, of which Judge John F. McGee was the dominating personality, and only one of the

many Minnesota citizens believing that what the State needed was a few "necktie parties." McGee was quoted as stating that, "A Nonpartisan League lecturer is a traitor every time. In other words, no matter what he says or does, a League worker is a traitor."<sup>121</sup> Other prominent citizens also accused League leaders of disloyalty and of obstructing the draft.

League leaders tried hard to refute the accusations of disloyalty by asserting their Americanism. North Dakota leaders pointed to the speaker of their Senate who was an American of New England stock, to the speaker of the House who came to North Dakota from the South, and to many others of foreign stock who were American born. If what the farmers of the Nonpartisan League produced was a European product, so was the Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution, the United States Congress, and the deeds of countless numbers of prominent Americans who had been influenced by European thought. The acts of the League were compared with those of Shays' Rebellion, the American Revolution, Populism, Wat Tyler's Revolt, Wyclif the Lollards, and numerous other struggles of English-speaking peoples who had revolted against the dominance of government by commerce and industry. League leaders pointed out that they were not trying to exclude others from the government but merely attempting to have the farmers pool their votes and use them "to elect representatives who would carry out their political and industrial programme." Everything the League had attempted was "peculiarly and distinctly American"; the farmers had obtained control of the Republican Party in North Dakota by legal means; and they had nominated and elected officers who legislated in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the citizens of the State. If organizing a state bank was un-American, so were the acts of Alexander Hamilton who drew up plans for the First Bank of the United States and those of George Washington who supported it. Furthermore, there were numerous cases of where States and municipalities were engaged in business activities similar to those proposed by the League. The State of Louisiana owned and operated the Port of New Orleans, including cotton warehouses and a grain elevator; Kings County, Washington, owned and operated the Port of Seattle which besides having storage and elevator facilities

<sup>117</sup>Eleanor Taylor, "Farmer and Factory-Hand," *Survey*, 38:565 (Sept. 29, 1917).

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 4(8):6, 8(4):10-11, 8(25):11, 9(5):3 (Feb. 22, 1917, Jan. 27, June 23, Aug. 4, 1919); *Wisconsin Leader*, July 31, 1920.

<sup>120</sup>Arthur Warner, "The Farmer Butts Back," *Nation*, 111:240-241 (Aug. 28, 1920).

<sup>121</sup>George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota*, 334, 336, 338 (Minneapolis, 1935).

provided for packing fish, baling hay, and processing foodstuffs. It was neither political nor industrial autocracy, communism or socialism, but democracy that was "in the saddle" in North Dakota.<sup>122</sup>

The League attributed the disloyalty charges hurled against it largely to newspapers which misquoted its speakers and to other similar acts which in effect amounted to a denial of constitutional rights. The League cited a series of acts as refutation of the charge of disloyalty.<sup>123</sup> Prior to the opening of the Third Liberty Loan drive, the League had wired the Secretary of the Treasury, William G. McAdoo, offering the services of its organization to the national cause, to which offer McAdoo had replied: "I welcome the assistance of the farmers of the great Northwest in this patriotic service to the country." North Dakota, a State fully controlled by the League, was the first to oversubscribe its quota by 100 percent despite the drouth of 1917. It had also oversubscribed the first and second Liberty Loan bond quotas; and Montana, said to have had the largest League membership in proportion to its population, was the second State to oversubscribe. It was further claimed that the farmers of Montana, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota, the four great spring-wheat States, had increased their wheat acreage by 52 percent. "The League farmers do not prove their loyalty by merely waving flags; they do not wear their patriotism just on their coat lapels—they carry it in their hearts." Thousands of League farmers were said to have had Red Cross acres; their wives had Red Cross hens and Red Cross circles. More than 550 leases were written by the North Dakota Council of Defense, placing some 100,000 acres of idle land under cultivation to produce additional crops valued at \$500,000. The council also aided in meeting the serious labor shortage.<sup>124</sup> North Dakota, furthermore, claimed that its draft costs were among the

lowest in the Nation.<sup>125</sup> Governor Frazier, since the start of the war, had issued at least twenty-five proclamations urging the people to stand behind their government. "Every state official from the governor down [had] pledged at least 10 days of manual labor in the harvest fields instead of a vacation." The League also had approved Wilson's Fourteen Points.<sup>126</sup> On August 10, 1920, H. G. Teigan, the secretary of the League, had written Upton Sinclair that "on the whole we had very little trouble with the national government."<sup>127</sup>

One of the best means of refuting the arguments of the opposition was citing what the League had accomplished in North Dakota in a legislative sense. The drouth and the black rust in 1916 and 1917 had left the farmers in the western and central portions of the State prostrated financially. The increasing demands of the Nation for more food production had resulted in the mortgaging of their land, livestock, and heavy machinery. Representatives of the North Dakota Council of Defense and the State Bankers' Association frankly admitted that the banks were unable to meet the credit needs of the farmers. Thus, when the farmers failed to receive aid from the Federal Government, Governor Frazier called a special session of the legislature to consider the feed and seed problem and other needs of the State. This special session, the second in the history of the State, convened on January 23. As a result, an act was passed which permitted counties where the seed and feed situation was acute, to issue bonds and loan the proceeds to farmers. The amount any county could issue was limited to 5 percent of the assessed valuation of the property in the county, from which six or seven million dollars were to be raised.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>122</sup>*The Nonpartisan League, Loyal or Disloyal?* (a leaflet, n.p., n.d.).

<sup>123</sup>*Nonpartisan Leader*, 8(7):5 (Feb. 17, 1919).

<sup>124</sup>H. G. Teigan to Upton Sinclair, Aug. 10, 1920, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>125</sup>John T. Frederick, "A Legislature That Works," *New Republic*, 14:105-107 (Feb. 23, 1918); North Dakota Dept. of State, *Legislative Manual*, 1919, 296, 371. The "Seeding and Feeding Act" entrusted the sale of over \$3,000,000 in bonds to the commissioner of agriculture and labor.

<sup>122</sup>W. G. Roylance, "Americanism in North Dakota," *Nation*, 109:38-39 (July 12, 1919). North Dakota furnished 18,595 men to the armed forces, or 2.12 percent above the national average. North Dakota Dept. of State, *Legislative Manual*, 1919, 441.

<sup>123</sup>*Nonpartisan League Methods and Principles*, 48-50.

<sup>124</sup>North Dakota Dept. of State, *Legislative Manual*, 1919, 433.



## WAS SLAVERY UNPROFITABLE IN THE ANTE-BELLUM SOUTH?

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Modern students of the ante-bellum South have generally taken the position that slavery was an economic burden to that section. According to one authority, "by the close of the 'fifties it is fairly certain that no slaveholders but those few whose plantations lay in the most advantageous parts of the cotton and sugar districts and whose managerial ability was exceptionally great were earning anything beyond what would cover their maintenance and carrying charges."<sup>1</sup> The consensus of opinion has been that the income of planters hardly amounted to a fair rate of interest on the money they had invested. An examination of the system from a strictly economic viewpoint, excluding political and humanitarian considerations, suggests, however, that slavery was operating in the South on an economically efficient basis.

Capital invested in slaves has often been considered an extra cost which made slave labor more expensive than free labor. This extra expenditure, however, brought with it corresponding advantages. By purchasing his workmen the slave employer acquired complete control over his labor force within the limits of the individual strength and needs of the human physique. In addition to the extra steadiness and docility of his labor force, the slaveholder controlled the consumption and production of his employees. Slavery was investment in labor. Instead of wages the slave owner gave food, clothing, shelter, and medical care to his workmen. This was the constant cost of slave labor. Because he could control this cost to the point of depressing the slave's consumption very near the minimum of subsistence, the owner could enlarge the surplus resulting from each slave's excess of production over consumption. Slave labor could only be less advantageous than free labor to the employer if free labor, because of increased productivity, could produce a greater surplus, or if the original cost of the slave more than counterbalanced the savings that were otherwise made by using slave labor.

<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 391-392 (New York, 1918).

A slave gang produced a great deal more than it consumed. It is true that the Negroes upon a plantation had to be maintained by the owner the year round and in the less productive early and late years of the slave's life as well as in the period of his prime. To offset this disadvantage was the factor of special fitness of slavery to the main crops of the South and especially to their production under the plantation regime. Southern staples, particularly cotton, needed year-round attention, and during slack times there was corn to grow, fences to mend, and other odd jobs, so that the laborer who under slavery was a constant expense to his owner could be profitably employed all the time. Under slavery Negro women also swelled the working force and were used productively in the field. Children were helpful in light tasks such as picking cotton and worming and suckering tobacco. David Dickson, a successful planter before and after the war, described women and children as "the main-spring of the cotton-raising" and preferred the old methods of slave labor to free because women and children had been used to such advantage. Slave labor under the plantation system lent itself well to supervision and guaranteed a stable labor supply.

The cost of maintenance for a slave was usually close to the minimum of subsistence. A Carolina planter possessing 40 Negroes figured that he actually expended in cash for medicine, clothing, and edible delicacies \$3.46 per slave per year.<sup>2</sup> Another cotton planter who lived in Louisiana reported that all maintenance costs on a 100-slave plantation were about \$17.50 per slave.<sup>3</sup> Forty-eight sugar planters, anxious to prove that it was necessary to maintain a protective tariff for sugar and therefore under a strong temptation to overestimate expenditures, told the Secretary of the Treasury in 1846 that food and clothing for working hands averaged \$30 per year, and for old

<sup>2</sup> Ralph Betts Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 226 (Chapel Hill, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> James D. B. DeBow, *The Industrial Resources, Etc., of the Southern and Western States*, 1:161-162 (New Orleans, 1852).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:150.

Negroes and children only half that sum.<sup>5</sup> James Falt estimated the cost for food, clothing, medical attention, and taxes for each slave upon his plantation to be \$34.70.<sup>6</sup> Somewhat higher is the estimate in an agricultural society's report which gives the cost of all food, clothing, and medical care on an 80-Negro estate as \$44 per head per year.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that where the amount of food each slave consumed is included in cost of maintenance, the greater part of these provisions were actually produced by the slaves themselves with little cash outlay.

Roughly estimating the amount each slave produced in order to have some basis for comparison with the amount each slave consumed, we can turn to some statistics available on the number of bales of cotton grown by each plantation hand. The Louisiana planter who estimated all costs at \$17.50 per Negro also stated that each average field hand, a classification covering half the hundred, would turn out 7 bales apiece on rich bottom lands.<sup>8</sup> Three and one-half bales was thus the share of every slave, and at a price of 8 cents a pound the amount attributable to each slave would be \$112. David Dickson, the phenomenally successful Georgia planter, made 12 bales per average field hand in 1859,<sup>9</sup> but this was truly exceptional. Twenty-four hands on the McArn plantation in Mississippi produced an average crop of 6 bales per hand in 1857, 1858, and 1859.<sup>10</sup> On a South Carolina plantation 254 slaves produced an average crop of 330,000 pounds of cotton, or 1,300 pounds per slave,<sup>11</sup> or \$104 per slave if cotton was 8 cents and \$130 if cotton was 10 cents. Of course the cotton planter had other expenses than the maintenance cost of slaves to subtract from the proceeds of his cotton crop. The figures quoted do, however, give an indication of the spread between gross income and current expenses of labor. It was the wide difference between what the slave consumed and what he produced that made slaveholding profitable before the war.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom*, 2:236 (ed. 2, New York, 1862).

<sup>6</sup> Charles S. Davis, *The Cotton Kingdom in Alabama*, 186 (Montgomery, Ala., 1939).

<sup>7</sup> Olmsted, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom*, 2:237.

<sup>8</sup> DeBow, *Industrial Resources*, 1:150.

<sup>9</sup> Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia*, 226.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Sackett Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi*, 96 (New York, 1933).

<sup>11</sup> DeBow, *Industrial Resources*, 1:162.

There has been general agreement that slaves produced a great deal more than they consumed, but the money invested in Negroes has been pointed out as the cause for the real unprofitability of slavery. Yet how much money had the average plantation owner actually invested in slaves? The majority of slaveholders had not invested a great deal. Pessimistic conclusions upon the unprofitability of slavery are largely the result of erroneously figuring the assessed valuation of slaves as the capital upon which slaveholders were entitled to receive interest. The same mistake is made as when Squire Turner told the Kentucky constitutional convention in 1849 that Kentucky slave property worth \$61,000,000 yielded less than 3 percent profit, or about half as much as the same amount of moneyed capital would yield.<sup>12</sup> Interest on capital until that capital was repaid was a fair expense attributable to slavery, but interest should only be computed upon the actual money invested, not upon the value of the property. The total value of slave property rapidly increased with the rising prices for slaves toward the close of the slavery regime, but the total value of Southern slaves was far greater than the actual money invested in them. Most planters in the years before the war had either inherited their slaves or bought the majority before prices were so high. Many of the large gangs sprang from a small investment which had grown by natural increase into a very valuable holding. For instance, Eli Capell, a Mississippi plantation owner, inherited 11 slaves in the mid-thirties, and a high birth rate plus some judicious purchases increased his number to 77 by 1860. Records available for 15 of the 25 years list 43 births.<sup>13</sup> Census reports from 1810 to 1860 show the Negro population as a whole increasing by about 23 percent every decade.<sup>14</sup> A Georgia owner of 65 slaves remarked in 1853 that "eleven years after the death of my father, the slaves that I inherited from him had more than doubled."<sup>15</sup> In the overwhelming majority of

<sup>12</sup> Ivan E. McDougale, "Slavery in Kentucky," *Journal of Negro History*, 3:236 (1918).

<sup>13</sup> Wendell Holmes Stephenson, "A Quarter-Century of a Mississippi Plantation: Eli J. Capell of 'Pleasant Hill,'" *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 23:368 (1936).

<sup>14</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920-32*, p. 2 (Washington, 1935).

<sup>15</sup> Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, "Plantations with Slave Labor and Free," *American Historical Review*, 30:743 (1925).

cases the slaves had been born on the plantation, and the money actually invested in the slave gang was not great.

The capital investment in a slave born and reared upon the plantation was the amount spent for food, clothing, and medical care till he became productive plus the loss of labor of the mother caused by the slave's birth. Such a slave was expected to earn interest on and repay the principal of this expenditure. The slave purchased on the block needed to produce a yearly surplus above his maintenance which would cover interest on the money invested and enough extra to finally repay his purchase price.

It is perhaps simpler and more accurate to consider the total slave force of a planter in determining his labor investment. Supposing a planter purchases an average lot of 30 Negroes, men, women and children of all ages, for \$15,000. The planter might consider his venture to be a profitable one if his gang continued to be worth \$15,000, and his labor investment brought in year after year interest at the fair rate of 6 percent, or \$900. Of course, figuring money invested in land and equipment and some recompense for his own labors as an entrepreneur, his plantation would have to yield more than \$900 profit.

It was only in cases where plantation owners had actually paid high prices for their gang that large sums needed to be set aside as interest and depreciation charges. The price of prime field hands rarely rose above \$700 in the first 40 years of the nineteenth century. Just before the panic of 1837 they brought over \$1,000 but rapidly declined to \$700 again. After 1845 there was a steady rise in slave prices which has been the basis for much of the argument that slavery had become unprofitable before the Civil War. Prime field hands sold in the lower South for \$1,100 in 1850, \$1,300 in 1855, and reached a peak of \$1,800 in 1860.<sup>16</sup> Slaves bought at these prices, however, were nearly all purchased for use in the deep South. Few slaves were purchased for use in the Border States or the Carolinas and Georgia because they could be so much more profitably employed out west. The amazing fertility of new western lands made the purchase of a field hand for \$1,200 or \$1,400 a profitable investment.

Not all the slaves in the deep South were purchased at high prices. Many were taken west by owners who were merely transferring their operations to more profitable lands. Win-

field H. Collins estimated that from one-half to three-fifths of the slaves sent south were taken by men whose Negroes multiplied very rapidly, who were tired of skimping along on poor lands, and who wished to share in the big money to be made in western planting.<sup>17</sup> Frederic Bancroft's study of the slave trade indicates that the majority of slaves taken south were sold—perhaps as many as 70 percent in the fifties.<sup>18</sup> The same writer believed that the volume of slave trading was much larger than Collins estimated, and that instead of ten or twelve thousand sold south every year during the last decade there were three or four times that many. Even if the higher estimate of the number of slaves who had to earn interest on excessive capitalization is accepted, the overwhelming majority of slaves in the Southern States were not bought at high prices. Of those who were, many were profitable investments because their labor on rich land yielded enough extra to repay their higher cost.

High prices were a distinct advantage to some planters because slaveholders in the Border and Atlantic States who sold their excess Negroes realized more money. Many planters could attribute their prosperity to the fact that their slaves had been, in the words of one owner, "very prolific, and their increase is no small matter in the item of profits."<sup>19</sup> Slavery was anything but unprofitable to individuals who thus recovered their original capital invested in slaves many times over. Although the condition of the soil made agricultural returns poor, the sale of excess Negroes more than compensated for the expense of maintaining old and useless slaves.

The fact that slave labor could yield such a large surplus over maintenance on lands of unimpaired fertility resulted in western planters bidding up the price of slaves till slaveholders in the older regions could no longer realize interest at the prevailing rate upon the current market value of their labor force. In this sense slavery was unprofitable for the majority of slaveholders, but upon the capital actually invested in slaves a very good return seems to have been paid to the majority of owners. Slaves were producing a large enough surplus over maintenance to make the retention of slavery very advantageous to the South.

<sup>17</sup> Winfield H. Collins, *The Domestic Slave Trade of the Southern States*, 62 (New York, 1904).

<sup>18</sup> Frederic Bancroft, *Slave-Trading in the Old South*, 398 (Baltimore, 1931).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, quoting the *Southern Quarterly*, 21:216.

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, 370-371.